

The place of Animation  
within Film and Media Studies:  
a theoretical and pedagogic approach.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines two main things. Firstly, animation as a set of signifying practices, and its relationship to Film and Media Studies; secondly, the ways in which those working within Animation Studies might constitute an identifiable academic community. This synthesis of reflection on the epistemological dimension of animation, and analysis of what animation scholars actually *do* in their various contexts, is what gives the research its originality.

The nature of knowledge, its classification along disciplinary lines, and the emergence of new and hybrid forms of knowledge - such as Film and Media Studies – are all outlined in the opening sections. The central argument is that knowledge must be viewed in its historical and institutional contexts, and that people's active engagement with these contexts is a productive force.

The ontological status of the animated image is delineated via some case studies and textual analyses. The epistemological basis of animation is assessed by looking at it as a 'discursive field' rather than as a 'discipline'. The specifically pedagogic dimension of animation is approached via the rich set of debates associated with practice-theory relations in the sphere of cultural production (and education in particular).

It is this discursive/dialogical dimension that underpins the key findings of the thesis: that we need to view academic behaviours in the context of theories of 'recognition' and identity-formation. In this respect, the ways that people talk about, name and recognise what they do has a very real impact on their social activity.

Methodologically, the thesis uses a combination of textual analysis and theoretical reflection on the nature of animation and knowledge about it. A range of empirical data related to animation teaching – syllabuses, email questionnaires and e-group discussion posts - are analysed, highlighting the discursive aspects of interview exchanges. In particular, the impact of online exchanges, and the nature of online communities, is examined.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	5
General Introduction	6
<b><u>PART ONE</u></b>	
<b>Chapter 1:</b> Epistemological issues and knowledge construction	11
<b>Chapter 2:</b> Subject boundaries and disciplinarity	38
<b>Chapter 3:</b> Emergence of new knowledge areas and their classification: The case of Film and Media Studies	66
<b><u>PART TWO</u></b>	
<b>Chapter 4:</b> Definitions of Animation	89
<b>Chapter 5:</b> Animation as a 'discipline' and its relationship to other disciplines	132
Figure 1	167
<b>Chapter 6:</b> Theory, practice and pedagogy: a consideration of Media-related courses and Animation	168
<b><u>PART THREE</u></b>	
<b>Chapter 7:</b> Methodological issues and the status of evidence	220
<b>Chapter 8:</b> Animation as an academic community	238
<b>Chapter 9:</b> Towards a typology of Animation	269
Conclusion: Animation: theoretical and pedagogic transformation	301
Appendix: A selection of Animation-related courses	306
Filmography	373
Bibliography	375



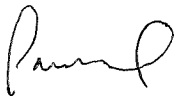
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## Declaration

I declare that the research presented in this thesis is all my own work.

Signed: 

Date: 3 November 2003

## **General introduction**

This section offers an overview of the entire thesis and explains what each chapter talks about.

The thesis is divided into three main Parts, each comprising three chapters. Broadly speaking, Part One maps some of the key debates concerning knowledge, disciplines and what happens when particular knowledge areas emerge, move in an apparently new direction, or break away from what might be termed 'parent' disciplines. Part Two looks specifically at how we might define 'animation', whether (or how) it constitutes a 'discipline', and examines some of the pedagogic approaches to animation in terms of debates about practice, theory and vocationalism. Part Three explores some of the ways in which animation can be said to constitute an academic community, by discussing online groups and academic behaviour, and concludes by constructing a tentative typology of animation workers and scholars and the communities of practice they constitute.

Chapter One offers a basis for the ensuing discussion of animation by first of all talking through some epistemological factors. The main argument is that knowledges can only be produced (and understood) in relation to their social and material contexts. A broadly Marxist critique of liberal models of

education and knowledge production and classification is wedded to a social constructionist view of how real people interact with and constitute the world they inhabit. The move is decisively away from ‘capital E’ Epistemology to a discursive/dialogical ‘small e’ epistemology which recognises that the people involved play an active role in shaping their chosen knowledge area. Discursivity and the social constructionism inherent to academic communities are concepts that reappear throughout the thesis, being central to my arguments about animation and how it is defined and taught.

Chapter Two examines some of the terminology, particularly the term ‘discipline’ and the related ‘disciplinarity’. The discursive dimension noted above suggests that the way that different knowledge areas ‘communicate’ with each other – whether this is via ‘boundary work’ or what is commonly referred to as ‘interdisciplinary’ collaborations – is central to the generation of knowledge. Again, it should be stressed that ‘disciplines’ are social constructions (and networks of activity) and they need to be read in this context.

Chapter Three moves on to look at the specific territory of Film and Media Studies, taking its development and diversity as a model against which to measure that of animation. Such an approach is of course complicated by the fact that animation as a set of practices and as an ‘object’ can be seen

to be subsumed within Film and Media Studies. Recent developments in digital culture, however, mean that animation can act as a route into understanding what is happening in the broader realms of (electronic) communication and representation.

Chapter Four considers how we define animation, sketching a typology of the form and reading it in relation to the debates about digital culture noted above. These discussions will be anchored by an evaluation of how animation represents 'the real', and animation's place in the range of media spectacles available in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Chapter Five explores how animation might constitute a 'discipline' in its own right. The problematic relationship between film and animation, Film Studies and Animation Studies is seen as a potentially productive 'blurred boundary', which is examined in the light of discursivity and recursivity. Again, rather than seeing animation as an essentially separate disciplinary structure, its connections and inter-relations to a wide range of other areas are foregrounded.

Chapter Six evaluates animation in the light of debates about practical and theoretical approaches to media and visual culture. The ways in which animation is defined in relation to practice, theory and a synthesis of the two are delineated via a consideration of broader debates relating to practice

and vocationalism. There is some analysis of interview and questionnaire data, to offer a reflection on actual practices, and underline the fact that it is real, material, situated practices that reveal the basis of phenomena like animation.

Chapter Seven reflects on the methodological implications of talking about and using online forms of communication (email, online discussion groups). It also lays the foundation for the final part of the thesis, which is concerned with animation as a(n academic) community. The chief methodological framework to be implemented here is that of materialist hermeneutics, a methodology that stresses the interpretive power of particular people (and the communities of which they are part), but clearly locates this within the social contexts in which these people operate.

Chapter Eight discusses the notion of community and identity in relation to animation in educational contexts. The idea of how people categorise and name what they do having *an impact* on what they do returns us to notion of social constructionism, and questionnaire responses will be looked at again in this context. The concept of 'recognition' will also be central to this chapter, in the sense that people will dialogically define themselves in relation to others, and the broader contexts in which they operate. The institutional framework, as represented by Subject Benchmarking, will be

discussed as an indicator of such recognition and the ways in which specific areas of knowledge are grouped and regrouped.

Chapter Nine, by way of a conclusion, constructs a typology of animation workers and scholars, and attempts to map this in relation to the key debates covered in previous chapters. The main point to conclude is that animation offers a space for a 'critical practice' that works through and develops some of the characteristics of this multifaceted form of visual culture, and that attention to the overlapping and mutually determining communities of practice in which Animation operates is the key to transforming a range of knowledges and activities.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Epistemological issues and knowledge construction**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I intend to offer an overview of some of the fundamental epistemological issues facing anyone attempting to theorise a particular 'knowledge area' (whether this is 'Animation' as it is in this research, or any other knowledge area). In subsequent chapters in this part of the thesis, I will move on to talk in more detail about definitions of terms like 'disciplines' and 'subjects' and how they inter-relate. Then, in parts 2 and 3, I will apply this to an analysis of Animation. But for the moment I intend to keep the discussion on a fairly abstract level. The main questions to be addressed in this chapter are: What is knowledge? Where does it come from? Who defines (useful) knowledge? What are some of the problems with classifying knowledge(s)? These are questions that require considerably more space to answer, so my argument will be selective. I will approach this by examining traditional/liberal models of knowledge, and then offer a critique, influenced by a Marxist epistemology. The main aim will therefore be to offer an analysis that discusses the 'social situatedness' of knowledges as constitutive of much of their meaning and power. In Chapters 2 and 3 in this part of the thesis I will then move on to examine the issues surrounding 'disciplinary' ways of dealing with knowledge (Chapter 2) and the emergence of 'new' and hybrid knowledge areas, specifically through the 'knowledge problem' manifested by Media and Film Studies (Chapter 3). To

begin with I shall outline the rationalist and essentialist foundations of classical theories of knowledge production. Then, I shall discuss the issues raised by a materialist critique of such theories. All of this is vital if we are to understand how social beings actively construct and apprehend knowledge, whilst existing within social and institutional contexts that have a bearing on this process of knowledge production. This is of vital importance to my subsequent discussion of how disciplinary structures develop and what role academic communities play in that development. The main research questions I am seeking to answer are:

- What is the relationship between Animation and other areas of knowledge?
- How does the apparent ‘multi-sitedness’ of Animation (this might otherwise be termed ‘interdisciplinarity’) impact upon how it is taught as a subject?
- In what ways do those (perceived to be)<sup>1</sup> working in the field of Animation/Animation Studies constitute a coherent community?

In order to offer answers to these questions we first of all need to examine the basic issues relating to knowledge construction and classification.

### **Traditional models of knowledge and learning**

If we start with a Platonic theory of knowledge, this suggests that there exist ‘forms’ or central ideas, about which it is possible to have exact and certain knowledge. Such concepts as ‘equality’ or ‘beauty’ are examples of ‘forms’. The suggestion is that these forms are invisible, yet they are the only things about which it is possible to have exact knowledge. The things



that we perceive in our day to day life do not constitute proper knowledge, and can only be seen as partial and inconsistent in comparison to the abstract reasoning associated with knowledge of 'forms'. This relationship between the surface reality as perceived by the senses and the hidden reality underlying things is something that we shall return to in later chapters. This theory is one that is founded on the primacy of abstract reasoning, and is deeply suspicious of knowledge that is derived from experience or sense-data, seeing it as flawed, partial and inconsistent. As Matthews points out the hugely influential Platonic epistemology is both rationalist and foundationalist, and his Marxist critique is one that challenges this.

Contrary to rationalists [Marx] saw practice and experimentation as the prerequisites of knowledge. There are no essences of things which are discoverable by processes of intellectual abstraction . . . [His] is an epistemology which sees consciousness generally as the product of processes of intellectual production. The raw materials are already theorised concepts, observation statements and theories of varying universality. Knowledge does not have, and does not need foundations (1980: 4)

The problem with the Platonic model, and those that followed it closely, is not only that it posits a world consisting of *invisible* forms (as there is no problem with certain things being not immediately apprehendable), but that it also suggests that they are *unchanging*, and that we are therefore in the realm of *essentialist* conceptions of knowledge. In due course I shall argue in detail that modern disciplinary ways of knowing are basically *discursive* formations and, furthermore, that this discursive dimension must always be

read in conjunction with the historical and institutional factors at play. This basically means that disciplinary ways of knowing, understood correctly, must be open to change. The notion of 'forms' of knowledge is a central plank of the liberal education/analytic philosophy of education, discussed below. It is important to recognise that there is a strongly *normative* impulse running through such conceptions of knowledge, not least because an essentialist theory of what knowledge actually *is* inevitably leads to essentialist and constraining notions of what defines *legitimate* knowledge.<sup>2</sup> My argument is that people, in the active course of their day-to-day lives will interact with each other and their surroundings and that this is productive of specific knowledges. The implications of this in terms of Animation will be discussed later, in Chapters 5, 6 and 8 especially, which examine (respectively): the field of Animation as a 'discipline'; its relation to practice-theory debates; and Animation as a 'community'. I also develop this idea in relation to Animation in Chapter 9, via a typology of Animation and its relation to 'critical practice' and Lave and Wenger's theory of 'situated learning' (1991). Taken down one particular pathway, of course, the idea that people actively produce or constitute knowledge about the world could lead to a variety of postmodern relativism, where there are as many 'knowledges' as there are people and contexts. However, it is important to recognise that one *can* discuss how people and their contexts play a role in knowledge production and classification without subscribing to such a relativist model. In effect, we are talking of a constructivist (or

constructionist) paradigm, a model that has its own flaws, but also has much to commend it (see Matthews, 1992). I return below to some of the problems and advantages of a constructivist epistemology. For the moment I want to continue considering some of the characteristics of liberal-rationalist models.

It is only relatively recently that knowledge and teaching have been thought of in a disciplinary sense as we understand it. As King and Brownell (1966) point out, pre-twentieth century conceptions of knowledge were characterised by the hegemony of Western philosophy, whereby philosophy underpinned and unified all knowledge and claims as to what constituted knowledge. As knowledge progressed however, it became clear that philosophy's role was now that of

helping separate groups of scholars understand what was involved in their claims of knowledge and what they were committed to in making those claims. . . . the question of whether or not something in a discipline was a matter of knowledge now rested with the discipline of knowledge. No one who was not himself [sic] a mathematician, physicist, linguist, or the like could hope to contribute much to the clarification of ideas in the disciplines (King and Brownell, 1966: 52)

In other words there was an increasing move towards specialisation of knowledge along disciplinary lines, and this led to an auto-reflexiveness on the part of those active in the disciplines. Or, as King and Brownell put it, '[t]heir autonomy compelled self-examination' (ibid.). This led, in turn, to the emergence of specific philosophies - that is, particular areas of now

'autonomous' knowledge, such as history, law, or physics, developed their own philosophy which asked specific epistemological questions, to be answered by the knowledge generated by the discipline.

What this makes clear is that attention to the epistemological bases of a particular knowledge area is fundamental to any 'progress' in that area. However, I would take issue with King and Brownell's implying that such epistemological soul-searching is a *consequence* of the discipline reaching a stage where it can be perceived as 'autonomous'. As noted earlier, a point was reached where disciplinary specialists, rather than philosophers per se, clarified knowledge claims specific to a knowledge area. King and Brownell suggest that this increased complexity of knowledge areas led directly to an increase in attention to the epistemological issues relating to knowledge areas. 'In recognition of this fact [i.e. that disciplinary 'specialists' were now required to clarify ideas/knowledge claims], many members of the disciplines of knowledge groped consciously for knowledge about their knowledge' (ibid.). To rephrase an earlier point, this epistemological self-examination was a direct consequence of, or was compelled by, the new-found autonomy of the discipline.

This raises a number of issues. Firstly, when does a discipline reach the point where its disciples begin to search consciously for knowledge *about* their knowledge (as opposed, presumably, to searching for plain

knowledge)? Secondly, is it really the case that a certain amount of knowledge has to be amassed before any such 'reflective' questions are asked? Is it not more useful to think of these things as dialectically related, in the sense that one is not prior to the other in a simple, straightforward way, but rather they feed off one another in a rather more dynamic fashion? The traditional model is one that sees the growth of disciplinary knowledge as a seemingly organic system, where boundaries that exist between knowledge areas are flexible only in the sense that they must be 'elastic' enough to allow for the addition of new knowledge to that area. Such an 'additive' model does not account adequately for how the boundaries may play a more active role in the growth of knowledge. If we see the boundaries as permeable or porous or, in some cases, as overlapping (as in a Venn diagram), then it is only a small step to thinking about these boundary areas and overlaps as the points where knowledge claims and newer conceptualisations are laid out and tested. Such a model sees the growth of knowledge occurring within a system which is basically disciplinary in nature, but one which is aware of the importance of tension/contradictions, and that the problematising of knowledge is a necessary feature of its growth and continuing relevance. I shall return to the importance of boundaries in the next chapter, where the work of Bernstein and of Fuller will be assessed.

## **Critique of liberal models of knowledge production**

Perhaps one of the most pervasive and influential models of how knowledge is produced, classified and transmitted, is that associated with the analytic philosophy of education tradition, best exemplified by the work of Hirst (1974) and Hirst and Peters (1970) and other liberal educators. In their model, knowledge is classified into 'forms' and 'fields', with the former being the 'basic' units of knowledge production, those areas of knowledge that have their own distinct techniques and skills that mark them out as different from the others. They are 'complex ways of understanding experience which man [sic] has achieved' (quoted in Barrow and Woods, 1988: 23). Thus, mathematics is a distinct form of knowledge from history or religion because each of these have their own conceptual framework. Fields of knowledge are, according to Hirst, what results when knowledge concepts that 'belong' to more than one form cohere around specific subject matters or problems. An example he offers is geography, where concepts and methods derived from a number of forms are utilised to answer questions concerning the nature of populations (human geography) or of the state of the planet (physical geography). Another example would be Film Studies, which uses a great deal of methodological approaches - psychoanalytic, Marxist, ethnographic, to name but three - to offer answers to the same problems.

The assumptions underlying the Hirstian position are critiqued by

Matthews (1980), who uses a Marxist approach to the questions of knowledge production. He has very little time for the methodological and epistemological bases of the analytic philosophy of education, demonstrating that the liberal impulse of that movement tends to imply that the forms of knowledge are somehow separate from the historical and social conditions in which they are first generated and then circulated. They are forms of knowledge into which people should be initiated - and the implication is that they are not altered by the historical changes that might occur. Another key point that Matthews makes regarding the 'decontextualised' nature of the analytic philosophy of education is that its adherents attempt to analyse concepts in an *abstract* manner, which again loses the specificity of what they might mean in a *particular* educational context. For example, Barrow (1981), who is sympathetic to the Hirstian position, suggests that the way to understand 'education' is as follows:

Before considering whether education is something of value and something that schools are or could be well-suited to provide, let us consider carefully what it is. Let us analyse the concept or consider what exactly is involved in the very notion of education - never mind what is actually going on in its name (37).

The problems with this are twofold. Firstly, it is erroneous to think that one can say 'never mind ...' and hope that a major part of the discussion will simply (and helpfully) disappear. The analysis of what 'education' means cannot be discussed outside of the specific context one is looking at, 'what is actually going on in its name', otherwise all one ends up with are a

number of different abstractions which will not cohere into a theory. Related to this is the strong tradition of talking in this way about educational systems, and offering a reading of what *should be* happening rather than what actually *is* happening. Such utopianism is another major problem, and takes us into a discussion of critical pedagogy, below. The second issue that this raises is methodological. As Matthews puts it:

analysis of concepts has a place *within* theories [but] is largely meaningless *across* theories. APES [i.e. analytic philosophers of education] that set out to analyse 'intelligence' or 'learning' or 'ideology' are involved in a pointless exercise...[when they] should be contributing to, and appraising, rival theories of learning, of intelligence and of ideology. For any putative analysis, we have to ask: Whose concept is being analysed? (1980: 162, original emphases).

In other words we need to understand (forms of) education as the result of social and historical forces, and construct readings and theories that place them in active dialogue with one another. To attempt to jettison these forces as if they were unimportant, or were some kind of excess baggage is irresponsible, as well as leading to theoretical constructs that have severely limited applications.

Such a distinction suggests that 'simply' philosophising about the nature of knowledge and learning (or schooling, or whatever) will not enable us to adequately account for the ways in which 'types' of knowledge - whether we use the terms 'forms' or 'fields' or the more widespread 'subjects' or 'disciplines' - are (and can be) classified and organised. To return



momentarily to the analytic philosophers, their model of knowledge tends towards a stratified system, where certain knowledges are fundamental, and have their own logical procedures for testing knowledge/truth claims. This seems, on the surface, to be a perfectly reasonable point, and is something that one has to deal with if one wishes to understand how systems of knowledge are classified. In relation to the points made above however - those that suggest that a key failing of the analytic philosopher position is that it *abstracts* knowledge from its social context - one can perhaps move towards a conceptualising of the social production of knowledge that will give us a firmer foundation on which to build. This is where, I would suggest, the concept of *reification* is valuable. In classical Marxist terms, reification alludes to the way in which something that is socially determined becomes 'naturalised', so as to take on the appearance of being immutable. The most fundamental example would of course be the 'naturalisation' of labour relations and the production of commodities, in that a relationship between people becomes a relationship between things (in other words, *what* people produce becomes more important than *that* they produce). The key point about reification is, as Thompson points out, '[p]rocesses are portrayed as things or as events of a quasi-natural kind, in such a way that their social and historical character is eclipsed' (1990: 65).

The tendency noted earlier, for disciplines to reach a point where they begin to *reflect* on their particular knowledge, how it is constituted, and so

on, can be seen – potentially at least – as a form of reification. In other words, rather than seeing the reflexivity as a positive thing, one can characterise it as a knowledge area ‘turning in on itself’. Instead of the principles of the knowledge area being scrutinised and discussed in their socio-historical context, what happens is an ‘abstraction’ of key concepts and terms. Ultimately, what happens in such a situation is that the relationship between a discipline and the real world becomes attenuated. Mike Wayne argues as much when he talks about the more reflexive turn in linguistics in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: as linguistics as a knowledge area reflected more and more on the nature of language, the connections between language and the lived, social realities of actual people were effaced (Wayne 2003: 155-82). (I return to the notion of reification in Chapter 5, where I also talk about the reflexivity of knowledge areas in relation to the terms discursivity and recursivity).

Such a Marxist-inflected model offers a useful way to look at knowledge production, and particularly the ways in which knowledges (and knowers) are separated from one another. It is by no means a perfect ‘fit’, and there are distinct problems with such a conceptualisation, more of which in a moment. However, I do think that a Marxist approach, and particularly the way in which relationships can be made to seem something that they are not, via reification, opens up the area very fruitfully. It should be noted here that my aim is only to offer a theoretical model for the ways in which

knowledge is systematised and organised, and tentatively move towards demonstrating why certain (kinds of) knowledges gain ascendancy over other kinds. It will become clear that it is not always (if ever?) because the ascendants are 'truer' or better than those other knowledges. What I am most certainly not trying to do is offer a totalised reading of the entire education system. As noted above, and continued below, there are distinct drawbacks with trying to apply wholesale a Marxist theory to questions of education. I shall utilise elements of Marxist theories (it is worth stressing the plural), but also incorporate theories that usefully go 'beyond' them (e.g. feminist theories of knowledge: see Hartman and Messer-Davidow, 1991), and others that perhaps problematise them.

Clearly, such a reading will need to take account of far more than the knowledges themselves, but also how they are institutionalised and, effectively, reproduced across time and cultures. This is not a crudely deterministic point, but rather a noting of the fact that there are always interests at stake, power to be exercised and - potentially at least - won and lost. The increased commodification of education and related issues of competition for research budgets point to one of the reasons for such adversarial terminology. It also suggests, yet again, that the attempt to bracket out values as in the analytic philosophy of education approach - Barrow's 'never mind...' - is going to lead to a reading of the situation that misses many of the most crucial issues. We need to recognise that the

production of knowledge takes place in contexts that play a role in *shaping* the knowledge. As John R. Hall states:

[we need to] understand . . . inquiries in cultural terms – as structured practices with roots in shared discursive resources that facilitate communication about the sociohistorical world . . . sociohistorical research is a craft activity carried out in professional worlds oriented to inquiry (1999: 7).

At the risk of verging on the tautological, this makes an important point: that ‘inquiry’ is carried out in places ‘oriented to inquiry’. In short, the contexts in which knowledges are produced, by whom, for what purpose, and so on, are vital in our understanding of the both the knowledges produced *and*, it should be added, the people and institutions producing them. Hall’s overall thesis is one that talks of the move ‘From Epistemology to Discourse in Sociohistorical Research’ (the subtitle of his book). By this he means not that knowledges are all relative to one another – i.e. that they are all ‘discourses’, competing for space – but rather that they must be evaluated and analysed in ways which take full account of their social context. In short, we need to recognise the shift ‘from foundationalist Epistemology to “small e” epistemology’ (9).

Such a shift is important in the context of this research project because I am going to argue that Animation Studies should not be seen as a ‘discipline’ in the conventional sense of the term. Although the designation ‘Animation Studies’ inevitably implies a recognisable and coherent ‘arena’ in

which inter-related inquiries are conducted, I would suggest that Animation Studies, such as it is, is actually a diverse set of *nodes* of inquiry. In Chapter 3 I shall address the very close relationship between Animation and Film and Media Studies. In Chapter 5, the notion of Animation as a discipline will be examined, arguing that any sense of disciplinarity that Animation might have is as a consequence of its discursive relationship with 'other' disciplines. As Hall's point concerning 'small e' epistemology makes clear, if there has been a shift to a more 'discursive' notion of knowledge then this requires that we reflect very carefully on the social and institutional contexts in which knowledges are produced, categorised and disseminated. As Chapters 5 and 6, and the final part of the thesis demonstrate, such reflection means talking about how Animation is taught and thought about, by whom, and in what contexts. An inevitable consequence of this is that we first of all need to tackle questions of constructivism, or the role that people play in actively constructing their knowledge of the world.

### **The 'social situatedness' of knowledge: problems with constructivism and perspectivalism**

One of the main issues at stake here – and one that is ignored by the liberal educators referred to above – is the role of the *individual* in knowledge production, and particularly the individual as representative of specific social positions. Recent fashions in epistemology have tended towards a relativist notion of how knowledge is produced (and 'consumed'). At their most simplistic, such theories imply that all knowledge is relative,

and that no one epistemological position is any 'better' or 'truer' than any other. The individualising tendency of such theories also tends to negate the *social* role that knowledge plays, in that it is produced by people in specific social contexts, not atomised, singular people – no matter how much this appears to be the case. Such a point links into 'liberatory' theories of education (Freire 1972): we cannot talk of 'knowledge' as if it is some 'object' that can simply be discovered and thereby understood. It is something that is negotiated and, in a sense, *constructed* by people in a dialogic relationship.<sup>3</sup> However, this is not to say that we can and should draw a relativist conclusion from this constructivist premise. As Matthews (1992) has pointed out, there are some flaws in a constructivist epistemology, but, at the same time, there is much that is useful, especially in its pedagogical ramifications. The stress in a constructivist paradigm on social beings (e.g. teachers and students) actively *working* to construct/build their knowledge is something that fosters a deeper understanding of the subject at hand, and also affords the learners an essentially reflexive position on their own learning (i.e. they can see, in the course of the dialogic learning relationship, that social factors are at play in what we understand knowledge to be, how it might work in specific contexts and so on). The leap from this – people can and should be active in constructing their knowledge – to a relativist position – everyone's point of view is equally valid – is of course one of the more pernicious of postmodernism's fallacies. And it is based on a misunderstanding of how

the 'subjective' and the 'objective' operate as concepts.

Mike Wayne's recent work on Marxist epistemology (specifically in relation to the media) is instructive here. He usefully draws a distinction between the objective object and the objective subject, and the problems obtaining to each. He states:

Marxists belong to the philosophical tradition of realism which believes that there exists a world independent of our senses, our means and modes of apprehension and representation . . . It is this which Marxists refer to when they write of the 'objective' world or situation (2003: 225).

The fact that we can say there is 'objectivity of the object (world)' does not mean that we should conclude from this that there is a position of the *objective subject*.

To say that there is a world independent of *our* experiences of it and practical activities within it is not at all the same thing as arguing that *we* can be independent of that world, that we can rise above the social interests coursing through our social locations and identifications. Thus we can legitimately say that there is no such thing as an *objective subject* (226).

Despite this, the chimera of 'objectivity' looms large in media practice. One of Wayne's most compelling points is that there are positions that question the putative objective discourse of the mainstream media, but do so from the flawed position of believing that *their* discourse has some sort of 'objectivity' that they deny to the others'. One (totally inadequate) 'answer' to this conundrum is to collapse into a debilitating relativism, whereby there

is *no* objectivity at all (not even of the world independent of the various subjects), and all viewpoints and theories are equally good or bad, depending on your level of scepticism.

A suggested route out of this impasse is to negotiate and actively embrace the *contradictions* inherent in thinking. This, I would argue, is central to any working understanding of how social beings produce knowledge, and also how they classify knowledges in a specific way (whether 'disciplinary', or some other form of classification). Thus, an overtly *critical* perspective on knowledge – disciplinary or otherwise – is the way forward. Wayne adapts Adorno's concept of 'identity thinking' as a way into warning about some of the shortcomings of an inadequately critical perspective. As Wayne points out:

Adorno noted that thinking inevitably posits an identity between concept (or representation) and the real. Some unity between thought and the real is not only inevitable but also desirable, since without it, there could be no social order that we would recognise. However, Adorno warned against the compulsion towards what he called *identity thinking*. This is characterised by the assumption that the unity or identity between thought and the real has achieved a consummate snugness in the here and now (230).

Basically, we could characterise this as being recognition of 'the fact that the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived' (Adorno 1973: 12; quoted in Wayne, *ibid*). Wayne offers the example of the Palestinian situation: if the Palestinians were to achieve their own state and this were then



made . . . fully identical to the concept of 'freedom', [then] we would indeed be in the grip of identity thinking, as much as if we believed that 'freedom' and the reality of western capitalism were identical (ibid).

The notion of *negation*, as characterised by dialectical thinking, is strongly associated with modalities of thought. As Hodge and Tripp (1986) have argued in their study of how children relate to television, the concept of modality is very helpful in working out the relative levels of reality attributed to a message. They also suggest that modality is strongly associated with negation, a term which is central to many conceptions of how we think about and relate to the world (e.g. Hegelian modes of consciousness, the various theorists of the Frankfurt school, the concept of the dialectic however it is defined, all have a sense of negation at their centre). In terms of modality, the argument is that underlying every modalized statement is an unmodalized positive. The example Hodge and Tripp give is the statement 'There isn't a monster in that room'. In order to 'make sense' of this as a statement about reality, 'we have to imagine the possibility of there being a monster in the room, and then negate that thought' (105). Another example they give is the statement 'Of course you're not going to fail', which appears to have strong modality ('of course') but this in effect only draws increased attention to the possibility of failure. Thus 'the positive possibility [i.e. of there actually being a monster in the room, or of failing] hangs over the negative like an after-image, as the key to its interpretation' (ibid). Further examples – 'This work is not of doctoral standard', 'Dubya is not the

lawful President of the United States of America' – show that in order to understand a statement we often need to think of a concept, only to immediately negate it.

These conflicting modes of thought – dialectical thinking and identity thinking – need to be carefully weighed up in relation to the construction of specific knowledge areas. For example, in what ways can the role of academics, members of a particular 'knowledge community', be said to fall into either category? I would argue that if those people are actively reflecting on the relationship between their material conditions and the knowledge they produce (along with related factors, like *for* whom they are producing it, *in conjunction* with whom etc.), then this is a version of dialectical thinking. This engagement with and negotiation of the different 'levels' at which knowledge can be figured is a characteristic of dialectical thinking, and is itself productive of knowledge. However, if academic discourse does not engage on these levels, if there is a kind of solipsism at work, due to no reflection on the material dimension (bluntly: does this knowledge have a use-value?), then it would seem we have reached the 'consummate snugness' ('smugness'?) to which Wayne alludes.

The difficulties outlined above take us back to the concepts of constructivism and perspectivalism. The main problem is that there is often a conflation between epistemic relativism and a radical scepticism about

'objectivity', which is itself confused with the 'objective world'. Of particular importance to the discussion here is the way that all of this impacts on notions of inter-subjectivity in the context of academic discourse. Academic disciplines can be said to have an 'objective' existence in the sense that they consist of more than the mere verbiage of their practitioners. They have an actual, material presence in the world, by dint of the artefacts they produce (research, poetry, inventions), and the productive forces they bring to bear in the world (they *produce* – knowers, knowledge, artefacts – and they also *consume* – budgets). However, the discursive dimension of academic practice is a vital component in the generation of knowledge, as we shall see in subsequent chapters. By this I do not just mean the 'discourse' of particular disciplines within the academy, but the ways in which teachers, students and researchers dialogically relate to the other material forces in the objective world. Thus, the notion of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983) and 'academic tribes and territories' (Becher and Trowler, 2001) become vitally important, as do the concepts of 'recognition' (Taylor, 1991) and the inherent 'dialogism' of progressive education (Freire, 1972). These are issues I shall return to in subsequent chapters.<sup>4</sup>

The difficulty with perspectivalism is usefully outlined by Gary MacLennan in his online review of a book on documentary by Richard Kilborn and John Izod (MacLennan, 1999). The authors offer what MacLennan terms a

‘subjective idealist’ position on perception – in other words, ‘where each one of us infers, as they put it, a different world’ (ibid.). If one remains within the subjective idealist position, one is unable to ‘motivate judgemental rationality, that is [one is] unable to explain why we should prefer one account over another’ (ibid.). It is also the case that a subjective idealist position has serious consequences for how knowledge is *shared* and developed over time. It is only through disputation and argument that knowledge can be developed, and this cannot be done in any way other than one that recognises that knowledges exist within a social context. To do otherwise is mere solipsism. MacLennan suggests that Roy Bhaskar’s critical realist paradigm is the best for negotiating the problematic relationships between reality and epistemic judgements or commentaries about that reality. All of this is important in relation to academic discourse and speech communities, as they rely on people having a *shared* sense of what things might mean. (The same can be said of any communication, quite obviously, but with a specialist field the issues of language and terminology become even more pronounced.) In Chapter 2 I will concentrate on Steve Fuller’s theory of ‘social epistemology’, where knowledge is seen to be socially grounded. A difficulty is that the ontological and the epistemological are often conflated. Or rather, as MacLennan points out, certain work falls into the trap of ‘anthropocentrism’. As he states:

Anthropocentrism . . . rephrases questions about reality as questions

about the nature and behaviour of humanity . . . [It] begins with the assumption that ontological questions can always be re-read as epistemological ones. The eventual outcome of this tendency is the loss of an understanding of reality as a multi-dimensional structure independent of humanity (ibid.)

The solution to this problem is to follow a model that uses 'depth ontology'. As Mepham and Ruben point out in the Introduction to volume III of their collection of essays, *Issues in Marxist Philosophy*, 'there is . . . a realist insistence by many of the authors [in this volume] on how absolutely crucial it is to distinguish between ontology and epistemology' (xii). This, in contrast to many theorists (particularly those following an Althusserian path) whose 'writing is naïve enough to pose the explicit abandonment of epistemology, or ontology, or both' (ibid). However, the solution is not to see the ontological and the epistemological as entirely separate, but to see them as usefully linked. This is a linkage that can best be examined via a discussion of critical theory and critical pedagogy.

### **Critical theory, critical pedagogy, and knowledge production**

The problems of 'critical' approaches to knowledge construction and classification are embodied in the debates between a critical rationalist such as Popper and critical theorists such as Adorno and Habermas. As Paul Connerton points out, both sides of this debate use the same terms to mean different things:

For Popper problems arise because a contradiction is observed between our existing knowledge and existing facts . . . critique [therefore] refers to

a formal method for testing scientific propositions. For Adorno, however, a problem is not something basically epistemological, but refers to a problematic condition of the social world. (34)

As Connerton goes on to point out, an example that Adorno uses is that of the contradiction between the concept of a 'liberal society' and the reality of it, where 'inequality of relations between men is determined by social power' (ibid):

This is not a logical contradiction, which could be corrected through more refined hypotheses, but the structural condition of society itself. Thus for Adorno critique does not refer to the critical testing of hypotheses, but rather to the development of the contradictions in social reality through a knowledge of them (34-5)

Thus, Adorno's position is one that relies on a dialectical mode of thinking in order to gradually 'work out' contradictions. What are at the centre of this mode are the *social* relationships between things. 'Critique' goes on within, and is defined by, a context. This can be linked back to MacLennan's points, following Bhaskar, concerning the transitive and intransitive (or epistemological and ontological) dimensions and the *relationship* between them. It seems to me that a position that grounds knowledge problems in the reality of the social world is all the better for it. It is engaging directly with the 'intransitive' or (depth) ontological dimension, recognising that the objective world that is independent of (and prior to) our experience of it, plays a role in our epistemology (the transitive). Our knowledges need to be grounded in the material web of practices in which we find ourselves. This means that the notion of pedagogy also needs attention. This is something

that I return to in detail later,<sup>5</sup> but for the moment I want to make some points about the epistemological underpinnings of the so-called critical pedagogy, as this is the closest (despite some flaws) to the materially-grounded epistemology I have noted above. It attempts to work through the dialectical relationship between knowledge and the social conditions in which it is produced.

In 'critical pedagogy' practitioners variously adapt and refine aspects of Paulo Freire's epistemology and pedagogy. There is also a strong tradition of critical theorists (in the classical sense of Adorno, Habermas and so on) being mobilised in educational debates (see for example Carr and Kemmis, 1986) and, particularly relevant to the current discussion, in relation to notions of culture and Cultural Studies (see Kellner 1997). In much of this writing there is a strong suspicion of 'postmodern' thinking on education and epistemology (see Hill et al (eds): 2002). Not only because the 'postmodern turn' has led to a debilitating scepticism with regard to Enlightenment concepts such as 'truth', 'objectivity' and the like (as sketched out above), but also because much of this theory is depressingly apolitical, despite any apparent radicalism. As Kellner puts it, the postmodern turn in cultural studies

resolutely severs cultural studies from political economy and critical social theory. . . there is a widespread tendency to decentre, or even ignore completely, economics, history and politics in favour of emphasis on local pleasures, consumption and the construction of hybrid identities from the material of the popular (20).

Despite (or rather, because of) this, it is not hard to discern why a critically-minded epistemology is so strongly linked to teaching in the area of 'culture'. As Kellner suggests, the transdisciplinary arena that constitutes 'Cultural Studies' is the site of theorising about 'forms of culture, society and everyday life' (24). As such,

The major traditions of cultural studies combine – at their best – social theory, cultural critique, history, philosophical analysis and specific political interventions, thus overcoming the standard academic division of labour by surmounting arbitrary disciplinary specialization. Cultural studies thus operates with a transdisciplinary conception that draws on social theory, economics, politics, history, communication studies, literary and cultural theory, philosophy and other theoretical discourses . . . Transdisciplinary approaches to culture and society transgress borders between various academic disciplines (25)

One can talk in the same way of animation as an area of inquiry. Animation is studied in a very wide variety of contexts and the knowledges produced in its name are equally diverse. Far from being a straightforward 'subject' or 'discipline', what we find under the rubric of 'animation' is a multi-faceted (and multi-sited) set of knowledges. In order to fully mobilise and understand these knowledges, therefore, we need an understanding of how, exactly, they 'meet' or overlap. The key to this, as I have suggested, is to concentrate on the critical dimension: the ways in which those working in these fields negotiate and debate the epistemological problems they encounter. This leads us away from seeing the diversity and apparent diffuseness of Animation Studies as a symptom of a 'postmodern' fracturing



of knowledge, and takes us to a more informed understanding of how knowledges work. This should never be seen as a call for sterile abstractions of what knowledge may or may not be, but rather a call for a materialist account of knowledge production.

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<sup>1</sup> I say 'perceived to be' here because one of the issues explored in the research as a whole is the ways that someone might say they are working in 'Animation Studies' but not be recognized as such (e.g. they might be categorized as doing 'Film Studies'). In other words, how someone perceives others and is in turn perceived is very important, and part of the discursive framework I map out in subsequent chapters.

<sup>2</sup> Such a normative impulse is not a problem per se, but the fact that such norms about what constitutes particular knowledge become naturalised, and therefore less able to be interrogated, *is* a problem. It leads to certain knowledges being delegitimised, and the processes underlying knowledge production becoming reified. This obscures the very social and institutional contexts I am suggesting are central to knowledge production. (I should like to thank Mike Wayne for making this observation).

<sup>3</sup> I return to this point in Chapter 5, where I examine the notion of Animation as a 'discursive' field, and in Chapter 9, where I explore Lave and Wenger's concepts 'situated learning' and 'legitimate peripheral participation'.

<sup>4</sup> The question of discursivity and disciplinarity is revisited in Chapter 5, a version of which is available in *Reconstruction* 3:1, 2003; the notion of community, recognition and dialogism in relation to Animation Studies is then further explored in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

<sup>5</sup> Questions of pedagogy are implicit throughout the thesis, but the more explicit discussion occurs in: Chapter 6, where I examine the relationship between practice, theory and animation; Chapter 8, where issues of community are explored; and Chapter 9, where questions relating to defining and categorising animation teaching are outlined.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Subject boundaries and disciplinarity**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter I will outline the dynamic way that boundaries can be seen to function in relation to knowledge areas. Far from seeing them as simple 'dividers' between discrete areas, I propose a model that sees boundaries as essentially productive. There are problems associated with the construction and maintenance of boundaries, especially when they are 'abstract' (i.e. when we talk about boundaries between different curriculum objects, we obviously cannot literally point to the boundary). As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the *discursive* dimension of definitions of knowledge areas, and the boundaries between them (and who is able or not able to cross the boundaries) is the most productive way of looking at this area, and shall be applied to animation as a knowledge area/community. The main focus in this chapter will be examining the idea of boundaries and disciplinarity, adapting the theories of Steve Fuller (1988), Messer-Davidow et al (1993), and Bernstein (1973; 1977).

#### **Terms and definitions**

Terms commonly used in these debates are 'discipline', 'subject', 'knowledge area', 'domain', 'specialism', and the various prefixed terms related to discipline – inter-, trans-, cross-, intra-, sub-, and the like. However, I think it is the case that a lot of confusion stems from people

using *different* terms to mean the *same* thing or the same terms to mean different things, a common problem of education (where terminology is far from standardised). There are nuances here that need to be teased out – is there really a difference between an ‘interdisciplinary’ approach and one labelled ‘cross-disciplinary’, for instance? If so, what is it? – and discussed in the light of how we actually research and teach things.

First of all we need to map out the territory: what do we call things? This commonsense question is actually very difficult to answer, or rather, the issues of terminology are central to how things are defined and what place they take in the world. What do we mean when we use terms like subject, specialism, discipline, and how do they overlap? What are the consequences for using these terms interchangeably (as, say, someone might refer to English as a ‘discipline’, but then also refer to it as a (school) ‘subject’)? I intend here to outline how these terms are commonly used by offering an overview of some of the key ways and places in which they have been mobilised. As we shall see, the ‘status’ (or lack thereof) attached to some terms and not others makes for a strong sense of competition and wielding of power which impacts on education as a whole. In subsequent chapters I shall discuss how animation fits into the schema, and the specific problems that it faces.

It would appear that the term ‘discipline’ holds the most status in

terms of academic endeavour. It has connotations of a clearly recognised and more or less unified body of knowledge, one that has, for want of a better phrase, *established* itself in the academic world. It is important to note too that the 'recognition' (this is a term that I shall explore in more depth in Chapter 8) can be complicated by those forces and groups outside of the academy – the 'general public', government, the world of work, and so on. Indeed, one could say that those knowledge areas most commonly referred to as 'disciplines' are those that are recognised by a *broad range* of people. Becher and Trowler talk of the 'dignification' of certain subjects as they 'increase in status and therefore acceptability within the academy' (15). Earlier, they note that 'the disciplinary dignification and programme affiliation that accompanies massification' (5) is responsible for the increasing numbers of academics who are working in 'vocational' courses, or who come from 'outside' the traditional academic pathways. By this they mean that certain 'newer' disciplines are becoming 'more dignified', or their status is increased. At the same time, there is an increase in 'affiliation' in the sense that trades and professions become more integrated with higher education (HE), and previously under-represented knowledge areas (they give the example of Law) see an increase in courses linked to them. All of these factors have to be seen in the context of 'massification' or the move towards a mass higher education system. Not only are more places on traditional and well-established courses going to be needed, but the expansion takes the form of established areas of knowledge outside the

academy becoming 'part of' it, and also areas of knowledge that have previously been overlooked and/or disparaged developing into legitimate academic areas.

Thus we can see that 'disciplines' are constantly in a process of 'becoming' and emerging from a network of inter-related 'knowledge areas', and that this process needs to be seen as linked to the material contexts of (in this case) HE. The reason why these and other terms are used interchangeably is precisely because there *are* similarities between them. I would suggest that we accept for the time being the notion of broad 'knowledge areas' – examples might be the social sciences, humanities, and so on – and understand 'disciplines' as suitably established and recognised sub-areas within them. The real difficulty comes when one has to recognise not only that knowledges are not only always growing and in the process of becoming, but that they are all, potentially at least, interconnected and inter-penetrating. This is certainly something that I think is the case with animation; not just that it is 'interdisciplinary' but that it actually runs as a discourse through any number of other disciplines. This is not the same as a 'straightforward 'interdisciplinarity'', as we shall see in due course (see Chapter 5 especially).

In talking about the nature of a discipline, Becher and Trowler state:

The concept of an academic discipline is not altogether straightforward . .

. There may be doubts, for example, whether statistics is now sufficiently separate from its parent discipline, mathematics, to constitute a discipline on its own. The answer will depend on the extent to which leading academic institutions recognize the hiving off in terms of their organizational structures (whether, that is, they number statistics among their fully-fledged departments), and also on the degree to which a freestanding international community has emerged (41)

So there are two factors that determine the status of a discipline, what we can term 'institutional' and 'communal'. I return to these issues in some detail later when I examine the status of animation as an academic community (see Chapter 8). What comes out here though is that there is a constant tension between an existing discipline and currents within it. These are most commonly understood as 'specialisms' – as is the case of Statistics 'within' Mathematics – but there comes a point where a specialism will achieve such status that questions will be asked (or pressure brought to bear by the exponents of the specialism): is it not (now) worthy of 'disciplinary' status? Becher and Trowler give two reasons for the emergence of these 'new' or disputed disciplines, and as noted above, they both hinge on recognition, firstly by the particular institutions in question and secondly by a 'freestanding international community'.

At some point, the role that a particular knowledge area plays may well come to the fore. To stay with Becher and Trowler's example, the increased recognition of certain research methods, not only in the rarefied world of academe but also in the 'real world' of social research carried out by governments, tended to mean that the hard empirical detail associated

with Statistics raised its profile. It is not surprising therefore that its status as a discipline was also raised. Mind you, there is not necessarily a direct correlation between real world status and that of the status in the academy. I would perhaps take issue with Becher and Trowler's notion of a 'freestanding international community' though: do they mean standing free of academic strictures? If this is the case, I would suggest that they are wrong, as the 'community' around any of these knowledge areas, no matter how contested, is always going to be essentially based in academic circles. In this sense, the 'community' cannot really be 'freestanding'. However, what is important is for a knowledge area to obtain recognition from *more than* just the 'inner circle'. Such recognition will invariably mean that the 'worth' of the knowledge area will increase, and disciplinary status may well follow. At the same time, we have to remember the 'dignification' points made above: that there are some disciplines that gain acceptance by virtue of their increased visibility in the highly competitive 'graduate market', or their ability to secure work for graduates. Clearly, this relates again to issues of vocationalism (explored in relation to animation in Chapter 6).

### **Learning communities and the classification of knowledge**

The application of a Marxist model to knowledge production, as discussed in Chapter 1, has its difficulties, not least the reductive tendency to try and map what can be overly deterministic models of Marxism onto what is a heterogeneous structure and experience. The basic thrust of such

perspectives however - that the *material* conditions in which knowledge is produced, across societies and across history, need to be carefully scrutinised - remains central to any convincing paradigm. One result of attending to such material conditions is that one has to recognise the ways in which the boundaries between knowledge areas - whether we term them disciplines, subjects, fields or forms - are often falsely maintained or, at the very least, they are not the result of the natural, 'organic' growth of knowledge.

Steve Fuller's work is useful here, particularly his concept of social epistemology (Fuller: 1988). At the basic level, Fuller's work in this area is an attempt to bridge the gap between sociological and philosophical conceptions of how knowledge is produced. He outlines the characteristics of both philosophy and sociology, when they are attempting to deal with issues pertaining to knowledge, and finds both disciplines wanting. What he proposes, precisely, is an approach to epistemological matters that attends to the social dimension (and, conversely, a sociology of knowledge that recognises the importance of epistemological reflection). According to Fuller,

philosophers treat the various knowledge states and processes as properties of individuals operating in a social vacuum. They often seem to think that any correct account of individual knowledge can be, ipso facto, generalized as the correct account of social knowledge (Fuller, 1988: xii).



This lack of attention to the detail of social context, this 'slide from the individual to the social' (ibid.), Fuller terms the 'fallacy of composition'. The key example he cites here is that of assertibility conditions for particular knowledge claims. Such conditions are

typically defined in terms of the evidential relation that the knower stands to the known, without taking into account the epistemic states of other knowers whose relations to one another and the known would greatly influence the assertibility of the . . . claim (ibid.).

In other words, the assertibility of particular claims to knowledge is based upon a more or less *localised* conception of how knowledge is produced and tested: who is making this claim? are they correct, in terms of what is currently taken as 'known' in this area, to make this claim? What gets lost here is any comparative dimension - an appeal to 'other knowers' and their epistemic states - which would strengthen (or 'greatly influence') the assertibility of the claim. Many might see this localised aspect of knowledge as unavoidable (and perhaps even desirable), but if it is, then there are distinct problems with seeing local, particular knowledge claims in a broader, social context. It is precisely this tension between the *specificity* of particular knowledge claims on the one hand, and their *generalisability* out to a broader social context (as 'social knowledge') on the other that concerns us here. This tension in effect structures how knowledge is arranged and ordered in social contexts, and must therefore be central to any understanding of how disciplinary (and other) boundaries between knowledge areas are set up and maintained.

Fuller identifies a second fallacy committed by philosophers discussing the nature of knowledge, the fallacy of division, which he says they commit

by assuming that a feature of the knowledge enterprise that appears primarily at the level of social interaction is, ipso facto, reproduced (by some means or other) as a feature of the minds of the individuals engaged in that interaction (xiii).

By this he means it is a mistake to see features such as 'inference schemas, so-called logics of justification, and scripts that have persuasive force in the public exchange of information' as anything other than belonging to the level of social interaction: they do not directly translate into or reflect the individual minds or belief systems of those involved. Why is this important? In terms of bodies of knowledge being recognised as such, and one of the key factors here is where and how boundaries (disciplinary and otherwise) are set up, such an issue is vital because it draws attention to the fact that the individuals are constrained by the system. Or, put another way, the whole could be seen as considerably less than the sum of its parts. A knowledge community will have particular rules and boundaries and these will be constitutive of the knowledge that is actually produced, but, more to the point, they will also therefore play a role in limiting certain knowledges or ways of seeing knowledges. There are pressures on members of cognitive communities to conform to the rules of those communities. This is not an entirely undesirable thing, clearly, but it should

always be remembered that it is not perhaps an entirely desirable thing either.

Fuller's points are therefore concerned with how people produce and classify knowledge, but also how they conceptualise this production and classification in broader (social) terms. More often than not, he seems to suggest, not enough attention is paid to the fact that there might be less consensus (he does recognise that it is problematic to talk about epistemological issues as straightforwardly 'consensualist') within a particular area than is commonly imagined, and that this is mainly due to the conformity that is imposed on much knowledge production and research. To return to his two fallacies:

When epistemologists commit the fallacy of composition, they suppose that one can predict whether a claim is likely to pass as knowledge in a particular cognitive community on the basis of what most of the community's members believe. Likewise, when [they] commit the fallacy of division, they assume that the best explanation for why a cognitive community officially treats a given claim as knowledge is that most of the community's members believe the claim. However, both inferences greatly underestimate the influence exercised by each member's expectations about what is appropriate to assert in his [sic] cognitive community, as well as each member's willingness to discount his [sic] own personal beliefs and conform to these canonical expectations - if only as a means of maintaining his [sic] good standing in the cognitive community. In short . . . epistemic judgement has much of the character of identifying and anticipating trends in the stock market (xiii).

Such constraints and expectations will not only limit activities and assertions within specific disciplinary areas, but they will also validate or invalidate potential cross-fertilisation. This latter phenomenon is most commonly

referred to under the umbrella term *interdisciplinary work*, but as we shall see later, such cross-fertilisation is considerably more complex than the use of this one term implies. For the moment, let the term stand however, as we turn to talk in general about some of the possible reasons for wanting to cross knowledge boundaries in the first place. As Fuller's final point above might suggest, one of the reasons might be that one's own community offers less security than someone else's. It might seem obvious to say that one should move to the other community if this is the case but this would be to overly simplify the way in which these communities are structured, the fact that the 'security' one seeks is primarily methodological rather than 'content' based (e.g. some in Film Studies feel more methodological affinity with English, others with Sociology etc.).

Therefore, one of the most obvious - and politically exciting - reasons for wishing to make connections between areas of knowledge that have traditionally been seen as discrete is that people working in these 'different' areas can exploit other commonalities they might have. An example would be those scholars who see themselves as having a Marxist orientation 'coming together' across their disciplines to discuss such commonalities. This would perhaps be seen as, and lead to, co-operation of an 'interdisciplinary' nature. What happens less often, it seems to me, is that during such debates the reasons for the current situation are discussed, and possible ways to change focus are put forward. This has been clearly

articulated within feminist scholarship, however. Hartman and Messer-Davidow for example, talk of

an epistemology that would bring feminists together across the disciplinary boundaries that were separating them', their project being one that encouraged people to 'question not only traditional knowledges, but also the division of academic knowledge into disciplines and the separation of the intellectual cores of these disciplines from their social contexts (1991: 1).

The reasons for this are that it is a move towards challenging existing power relations in the way that knowledge is regulated, classified or, dare I say it, *disciplined*. Such scholarship views social context and human agency as central to these problems and suggests that what is necessary is a radical rethinking of the bases of knowledge production. For, as is noted in the preface of a subsequent volume:

[f]or only two centuries, knowledge has assumed a disciplinary form; for less than one, it has been produced in academic institutions by professionally trained knowers. Yet we have come to see these circumstances as so natural that we tend to forget their historical novelty and fail to imagine how else we might produce and organise knowledge (Messer-Davidow, Shumway & Sylvan, 1993: vii).

Here again, the concept of reification raises its head, with the suggestion being that specific forces at play in the development of knowledge production and classification have been overshadowed and this means that we cannot now conceive of any alternatives to the current situation.

Any doubt that the production of knowledge and its subsequent



classification is not inextricably bound up with power relations can be expunged by looking closely at how the prevailing values at work within a community of scholars shape the paradigms in which they are working. In other words, the above formulation needs to be rethought: are knowledges produced and then classified; or do the classifications or categories actually determine the kinds of knowledge that are produced? Clearly, the answer to this is that the two exist in a dialectical relationship, whereby they are both mutually determining. Indeed, this takes us into an area where questions concerning the *development* of specific types of knowledge are crucial. Lefebvre (1968) makes a distinction between growth and development, which is useful in this context, as it suggests ways in which knowledge can be conceptualised. For things (and here I am referring specifically to bodies of knowledge) to 'grow', they must

increase gradually in respect of certain of their characteristics. These characteristics are quantitative and hence measurable. At the same time and out of the same process of change, new characteristics, qualitative differences, emerge (Lefebvre, 1968: 29).

He therefore suggests that these concepts must be thought of as existing in a changing, dynamic system. However, *growth* refers to an increase in already-existing characteristics, while *development* refers to the emergence of new characteristics. In terms of knowledge, these two terms have perhaps been used interchangeably - a growth of knowledge is a development of knowledge, and vice-versa - but we can see here that their meanings are nuanced and, rather than being interchangeable, they are in

fact very closely - dialectically - related. 'Growth . . . is quantitative, continuous; development is qualitative, discontinuous. It proceeds by leaps . . . Growth is easy to predict, development less so' (ibid.). In order for something to develop, there must be steady growth, but in order for there to be steady growth, there must be development. (I am tempted to say 'new development', but Lefebvre's distinction reveals this phrase to be tautological, as *all* developments are, by definition, new).

This questioning of modes of knowing and how they evolve is something with which Foucault concerned himself, particularly the ways that specific *developments* were seen with hindsight as logical steps - that is to say, *growth* - in the ordering of knowledge, when they were perhaps not as logical as they first appear. As Hoskin suggests about Foucault's *The Order of Things*:

[it] is about nothing other than the nature of certain fields of knowledge - general grammar, natural history, and the analysis of wealth - and their transformation into other fields - philology, biology, and the political economy - fields which, far from being logical consequents, were bizarre dislocations of their antecedents (1990: 29).

The point here is not so much that we trace in minute detail the evolution of these, and other, 'fields'. This is not the time nor the place to carry out such a task, though I would suggest, albeit in a rather clichéd way, that one has to know where one came from in order to know where one is going, and such detailed study is an integral part of this. My point for the moment is

that as fields grow, a kind of constraining occurs as to what is 'worthy' knowledge within a particular field. Or, put another way, certain developments in knowledge are more likely than others. What occurs is a limiting process, whereby

the judgements that knowers make about their inquiry constitute a process of selection that produces the paradigms and canons they use to guide research, training and teaching. Knowers' judgements, regularized and institutionalized, organize both the cognitive and the practical aspects of inquiry: on the one hand, the subjects, methods, and theories; and, on the other hand, the activities of producing knowledge and knowers. Conversely, the resulting selection continues to enable and constrain the knowers by determining...the selections they can make in the future. Thus, the range of selections is already defined; it is implicit in the organization of the discipline - how hegemonic its culture and how closed its borders to neighboring disciplines (Hartman and Messer-Davidow: 3-4).

The idea that knowledges exist in a power-based relationship with each other has become one of the tenets of post-structuralist thought. In short, and at the risk of caricaturing, it is the knowers who constitute what is worth knowing, and the knowledge(s) follow on from there. Admittedly, there is a problem with the fact that the knowers have to be initiated in the first place, and therefore have to be initiated into something. So, what comes first, the knower or the knowledge? This dilemma is hard to surmount, and takes us right to the core of the debate concerning the nature of knowledge. On the one hand, there are those who argue for rationality and science, and on the other there are those who suggest that even science is 'simply' another discourse, and therefore liable to the 'paradigm shifts' noted by Kuhn (1970) for example. Again, at the risk of caricaturing (though this is



something that the opposing 'sides' often tend to do to each other), the former position is dismissed as 'mere empiricism', irrevocably tainted by the glossed-over 'constructedness' of its discourse, whilst the latter is criticised for the 'relativism' of its position. (For a recent and provocative contribution to this ongoing debate see Sokal and Bricmont: 1998).

### **Disciplinary boundaries: emergence and maintenance**

We now need to turn and consider in more detail precisely how and why boundaries between knowledge areas are set up and maintained and, just as importantly, why they are sometimes transgressed. This ties in with conceptions of learning/cognitive communities and how knowledge can be classified, some of which has already been covered. However, it is necessary to offer a more nuanced account of disciplinary categories and sub-categories, before moving on to outline some of the pedagogic implications, and how all of this impacts on the curriculum and actual conditions of those engaged in a particular area (whether teachers or learners).

Again, Fuller is instructive, and offers some interesting insights into the boundedness and autonomy of disciplinary areas. One of the key factors he identifies is that fully autonomous disciplines will have a strong sense of being practised for their own sake. Using the example of criticism, he notes that as it failed 'in its public mission' there was a rise 'of criticism

as an academic discipline pursued for its own sake' (Fuller: 192). In other words, criticism was initially meant to 'educate' an audience about good and bad art, but due to a series of failures in this project (e.g. fundamental disagreements about what constitutes 'good', 'bad' etc., not to mention the public's ignoring much of what the critics said) the act of criticism itself became the focus. Over a period of time this led to the build up of a body of knowledge, via exchanges between experts in the field, institutionalisation and so on, that was considered worthy of pursuit in its own right. As Fuller states, such a conceptualisation is radically different from that propounded by someone such as Kuhn, who sees the emergence of disciplinary bodies of knowledge, or paradigms, as a process whereby 'a wide range of previously unrelated phenomena are gathered together under a set of unifying principles, which can be verified through different but converging methods' (ibid.). The crucial thing in the Kuhnian model is that the discipline/paradigm emerges by, as it were, *taking control* of an area of inter-related knowledges, and unifying them. The example of criticism as mapped out by Fuller is very different, in the sense that it suggests that 'disciplines form *not* by staking a clear domain for itself [sic], but rather by successively failing to control some *other* body of knowledge' (ibid., italics in the original). It could be argued, then, that discipline formation is a kind of *retreat*: an admittance that an original, *applied* version of the knowledge has failed, and what remains is a kind of intellectual formalism, where the pursuit of (the now) disciplinary knowledge is seen as an end in itself, fully

justified.

This is not to say that such a bounded, autonomous discipline will not produce valid knowledge, but it is important to stress that what appears to be lost in the move towards disciplinarity as Fuller outlines it is some of the knowledge area's *application* to the 'real world'. This is important when we turn to consider the ways in which people actually produce and engage with knowledge on a day-to-day basis, and it goes some of the way to explaining the deploying of particular pedagogic strategies: the traditional model of learning, where knowledge is seen as something that is simply transmitted to learners from the storehouse, in an additive fashion (referred to as 'banking' in Paulo Freire's (1972) terminology); or the more radical (e.g. Freirean) pedagogy, based on dialogic/dialectical methods, and with a strong sense of praxis/reflection on the part of the participants. My orientation is towards the latter of these two positions, but tempered by a recognition that certain power relations cannot be simply wished away, and that this might mean that aspects of the former need to be recognised and transformed, rather than rejected out of hand. This has been one of the failings of some of the writings of 'critical pedagogy', where actual conditions of the teaching/learning experience and their implications are sidelined in favour of more Utopian musings - how it *ought* to be done rather than how it *is* done. The difficulty with concentrating on the 'ought' rather than the 'is', is that people often get carried away with possibilities of

transformations, and the many actual, lived contradictions of what is currently happening are ignored. These features of the 'reality' are potentially useful in understanding the process of transformation and should be engaged with. Aside from these 'practical' considerations (see later for a discussion of some of the features of 'practice' and 'theory' and how they impact upon teaching, particularly in the domain of film/media (see also Buckingham, 1996)), the key point here is that of retaining some notion of the social importance of knowledge building and classification. Whilst exploring how knowledge areas fit together and overlap, it should always be kept in mind, as Hartman and Messer-Davidow point out, that many of these 'intellectual cores [have become separated] from their social contexts' (1991: 1). Indeed, it appears that, in order to be seen as a discipline, to receive the intellectual validation that this entails, such separation is necessary. As noted above, disciplinary maturity can therefore be seen as a form of retreat from the rather messier social world, and the questions that it might ask.

The boundary between a discipline and its social context certainly requires attention, but so too do the boundaries that exist between disciplines. Fuller (following Fodor) proposes the concept of *orthogonality* as a useful one for theorising such boundaries. This term refers to the idea that two (or more?) disciplines may be separate, but this does not necessarily mean that they deal with mutually exclusive subjects. 'Instead,

they may cross-classify the same general subject matter' (Fuller: 195). Thus, the two disciplines can be seen to be separated by methodology and terminology rather than subject matter. This explains why the 'same' area can appear to be treated in, to use Kuhnian terminology, incommensurable ways, and there are therefore difficulties with any attempts for one discipline to build on the findings of the other. However, there is a strong suggestion that the concept of orthogonality is helpful in that it maps out how one discipline can *problematise* the knowledge of another. In a sense, orthogonality means that the 'same' knowledge claims are subjected to more than one methodological framework, and that such 'overlaps' are a necessary pre-condition of knowledge development and growth.

Such a conceptualisation also raises interesting issues for theorising how and why disciplinary boundaries exist. Indeed, it has to be said that where two boundaries meet is not a simple neutral space, empty of meaning. One of the problems with boundaries/borders between things, is that we need a conceptualisation that can get round the fact that a boundary *between* two things must either also *belong* to *both* of those things (in the sense that it 'touches' both of them, but thereby keeps them separate), or be a kind of neutral space in between which is neither one nor the other. This then begs the question, what *is* this neutral space between the two things, if not some third thing? Fuller suggests at one point that disciplinary boundaries could be seen as 'fault lines that conceal future

scientific revolutions' (195), and this, along with the notion that 'a disciplinary boundary can be drawn only at the risk of excluding other possible disciplines' (197) perhaps means that it is the *borders* of particular knowledge areas which require the most theoretical attention. Certainly, if we are to understand how the various kinds of cross-disciplinary relationships function (e.g. multi-, inter-, trans-, etc.), then we need to understand what exactly is happening at these crucial points. My discussion of Film and Media Studies in the next chapter (and then Animation's position after that) picks up on some of these points, and Film and Media Studies could certainly be viewed as a discipline which exists at a meeting place on the boundaries of a large number of other disciplines. Does this then mean that Film and Media Studies is a second order discipline, feeding off the others? Or is it the other way round, with Film and Media Studies existing as a kind of 'master', multi-discipline? I think one thing is certain: true knowledge growth comes about as a result of active, dialogical engagement between knowledge areas (whether these areas are termed disciplines is perhaps not so important), and this is less often done by established knowers, firmly situated in their field, embarking on a straightforward notion of interdisciplinary co-operation, than it is by people working at the boundaries, looking to deliberately problematise what we know and how we classify and teach it.

## **Bernsteinian classification of knowledge**

Another useful theoretical model when discussing boundaries between knowledge areas is Basil Bernstein's work, and in particular his concepts of *classification* and *framing*. This is helpful because it attempts to describe and explain the relative differences between boundaries. It is an explicit recognition that not all boundaries between knowledge areas are the same, that they change across time and social context. Bernstein's work in this area is part of a broader attempt to develop a theory of curriculum and pedagogic practice, and he sees such a theory as inextricably linked to an understanding of precisely how subjects are either kept separate or allowed to overlap. Classification refers to the varying degrees to which material is categorised and thereby arranged into a curriculum. It is therefore directly concerned with boundaries between subjects, with strong classification denoting a high level of differentiation between knowledge areas, separated into discrete subjects, and weak classification denoting a curriculum where these boundaries are less rigid, and the subject matter is more or less 'integrated' (Bernstein, 1977: 79-84; 85-115). In this sense, the area covered by Media/Cultural Studies could be seen as an example of weak classification, in that its hybridity and methodological plurality mean that its boundaries are, by necessity, fragile. Perhaps a better term to use here, instead of 'fragile', is 'permeable', with its connotations of ease of movement across the boundaries. 'Fragile' implies that the boundaries are there to *prevent* movement, but are too weak to resist; 'permeable' implies that the

boundaries play a more *active* role and that they actually help to *produce* the integration of subject matter characteristic of such curricula. Relating this point to what Fuller says about disciplinary boundaries and orthogonality, it could also be argued that a weakly classified curriculum is one that 'opens itself up' in order to allow better growth and development of knowledge. Clearly, when I say 'opens itself up', I mean that there are specific structural determinants that enable this 'opening up': a curriculum is a social construct, and subject to social and institutional pressures.

In discussing his key concepts of classification and framing, Bernstein points to the idea that there are two types of curriculum, and this is central to our understanding of how subject areas 'fit together' (or are 'held apart') within particular educational contexts. Before moving on to apply this to the teaching of animation, we therefore need to offer an outline of some of Bernstein's concepts.

First of all then, there is the 'collection' curriculum - this is basically a curriculum where 'the contents are clearly bounded and insulated from each other' (Bernstein, 1973: 365). The term 'collection' refers to the fact that 'the learner has to collect a group of favoured contents in order to satisfy some criteria of evaluation' (ibid.). Bernstein also refers to the contents (by which he mean 'subjects') in such a curriculum as 'stand[ing] in a closed relation to each other' (ibid.). All this seems to suggest the 'schoolish' curriculum, where one has to study a range of different subjects, which are marked by



their difference to one another. Only by 'collecting' (or succeeding) in a range (all?) of these, is someone considered successful in that context.

The second type of curriculum that Bernstein discusses is called the 'integrated' type. In this one, 'the various contents do not go their own separate ways, but stand in an open relation to each other' (ibid.). Instead of the clearly demarcated subject areas of the 'collection' curriculum, this is characterised by unclear divisions between areas. This notion of divisions or boundaries between subject areas is central to Bernstein's concept of classification. As Sadovnik (1995) puts it:

Strong classification refers to a curriculum that is highly differentiated and separated into traditional subjects; weak classification refers to a curriculum that is integrated and in which the boundaries between subjects are fragile (9).

Thus, classification basically refers to how much seemingly separate subject areas are kept apart. '[W]here classification is strong, contents are well insulated from each other by strong boundaries. Where classification is weak, there is reduced insulation between contents for the boundaries between contents are weak or blurred. *Classification thus refers to the degree of boundary maintenance between contents*' (Bernstein, 1973: 366. Emphasis in original). So, perhaps obviously, how subject matter/knowledge is 'classified' is one of the defining criteria for making sense of the curriculum.

Bernstein's other key concept is 'framing'. This refers to 'the structure of the . . . pedagogy'. In other words, how something is 'framed' is all to do with the delivery of the material, to put it bluntly, the teaching. 'Frame refers to the strength of the boundary between what may be transmitted and what may not be transmitted, in the pedagogical relationship' (ibid.). It is important to note that there is a range of options available, and that both teacher and learner participate in such a system. 'Strong framing entails reduced options; weak framing entails a range of options' (ibid.) - i.e. if something is framed strongly, you are pretty much told what to do, if it is framed weakly, then there is much more latitude to do things. As Bernstein goes on to point out, there is also a sense of framing in the way that a boundary is maintained between what he calls 'everyday community knowledge' and 'educational knowledge' (367). In other words, what is 'legitimate' knowledge, what role (if any) does 'outside' knowledge play in the learning process?

How classification and framing interact with one another is crucial, and there are a variety of permutations. Certainly when we turn to think about a complex field such as Film and Media Studies these are useful concepts because they help us to theorise how knowledge, learners and the curriculum interact. What is most interesting, therefore, is how we can apply the concepts of classification and frame to knowledge areas that are recognisably 'hybrid', such as Media/Film Studies. If a knowledge area or

part of the curriculum is based upon a combination of aesthetic and methodological paradigms, adapted from 'other' knowledge areas, then how do classification and frame function? The simple answer to this question is that curriculum areas such as Media Studies are classic instances of weak classification, in that they appear to encompass (and draw from) a diverse number of other 'disciplinary' discourses (Art, Literary Studies, Sociology etc.). In this respect, there should be no pejorative connotations attached to the idea of 'weak'. Indeed, some have argued that the very way that Media Studies appears to function as a discursive 'meeting point' for a large number of crucial epistemological and pedagogical issues, is what makes it one of the most important sites for curriculum attention (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983). Media Studies is seen as a way into retheorising and reformulating the curriculum as a whole; it raises issues and relativises knowledge claims made in other disciplines. This links to points made by Fuller (1988), and the way that certain knowledge areas can lay claim to, or call upon for adjudication, elements of other knowledge areas. Certainly, one of the key points of this research is to explore how animation relates to knowledge areas/'objects' such as Media and Film Studies. As argued in subsequent chapters, I believe that animation can offer an instructive route into rethinking these other areas, whilst such rethinking also enables a reflection on the defining of animation as a phenomenon, and approaches to teaching it.

This outlining of disciplinarity, while seemingly abstract, has therefore been laying the basis for the specific analysis of Animation to come. There are issues relating to how Animation as a field functions in a disciplinary sense and, in order to fully understand them, we must engage with how boundaries are perceived, maintained or transgressed within the field. I am going to argue that Animation's interaction with a multitude of other, inter-related knowledge areas, means that the best way to view it is as a 'discursive strand' running through (and connecting) these other knowledge areas. The way in which different learning communities (mis)recognise and respond to such discursivity determines whether and how they will recognise Animation as a knowledge area 'in its own right'. I am going to suggest in the next chapter that the concept of 'modality' is useful for understanding how specific knowledges might be mobilised in any particular context, with particular reference to Film and Media Studies. It is important that we try not to force Animation to be one single, coherent thing, as what gives it its potency is the fact that it is in many different 'disciplinary' places at once. It is in a constant state of 'becoming', fuelled by the critical and reflexive interaction of its diverse constituents. How those constituents frame and classify what they (and others) do, will form the basis of chapters still to come.

One of the problems with much of the work within this area is that it offers a theoretical account of how knowledge areas might fit together, and

the structural/sociological issues that this raises, but that what is missing is an empirical grounding, which relates theoretical possibilities to actual analysis of specific examples. Whitty (1985), for instance, notes that it is necessary for such work to avoid 'the obsession with theoretical purity [and] give way to the development of theoretically informed empirical research' (38). This means studying how particular curricular configurations evolve and operate, by paying attention to the specific historical, ideological and institutional factors in play at any one moment. Indeed, this is one of the main aims of this research: to suggest some *theoretical* difficulties with the knowledge area pertaining to animation, and particularly its relationship with Film and Media Studies, and to explore these issues via a number of empirically-based examples, and what animation scholars and practitioners actually say about what they do. Their discursive strategies are a vital part of the remainder of this research. I shall turn to some of the issues specific to animation and its knowledge area in Chapters 4 and 5; for the moment I need to outline some of the problems of looking at the broad area associated with Film and Media Studies.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Emergence of 'new' knowledge areas and their classification - the case of Film and Media Studies**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter I am going to discuss the highly complex and fertile ground that is Film and Media Studies. The reason for this discussion is that we cannot move on to fully understand Animation Studies unless we first understand Film and Media Studies. I will therefore suggest that the history and emergence of Film and Media Studies, the difficulties, controversies, theoretical advances, and astonishing growth, offers parallels with Animation, which we would do well to try and disentangle. I'll state right now that we will fail in that attempt at disentanglement, for reasons I will sketch shortly. But it is important to reflect on these debates, and why disentangling these areas *is* so difficult.

I shall begin with an obviously abbreviated historical sketch of the development of the field of Film and Media Studies. This will lead to a discussion of the epistemological bases of this area, paying specific attention to comments made by Corner (1995) and Durant (1991). Finally, I shall point to some of the ways that new technologies and how we study them have changed existing fields like Film and Media Studies. Part of this section will therefore act as a bridge into subsequent sections on Animation proper, as it will explore converging/diverging models of Animation and live

action. The way in which we define these apparently separate areas has important consequences for understanding them and how they relate to one another. A key argument will be that not only do we need to recognise that new media forms 'remediate' older forms rather than simply *replacing* them (see Bolter and Grusin, 1999) but that the theoretical apparatus available to us at any one time should also be rigorously subjected to such 'remediation'. I shall also propose that Animation should be seen as a *meta-discourse*, effectively drawing together and interacting with a very wide range of discourses about audio-visual media. Therefore, instead of simply seeing Animation as a 'genre' or subset of a broader category, such as 'Film' or 'Art and Design', the suggestion will be that we need to recognise that Animation represents the most promising way of categorising and theorising some of the changes in the field of 'audiovisuality'. This discussion of Animation's status will, of course, be revisited in subsequent chapters, where I will examine how we define it (Chapter 4), whether and how it might constitute a 'discipline' (Chapter 5), and some of the issues related to teaching Animation as a theory and as a practice (Chapter 6). The basic hypothesis is that Animation has always represented a vital 'link' between a wide variety of inter-related knowledges, but that that ability to act as a link has become ever more crucial with the advent and wide dissemination of digital media. My examination of the 'culture' and 'community' related to Animation (Chapters 7, 8 and 9) shall therefore offer some analysis of how such changes, and Animation's role in them, play out

in the discursive and dialogical relationships between different groups engaged in Animation teaching and research. The ways in which Animation links a large number of other disciplines cannot just be explained by saying that Animation is therefore 'interdisciplinary': as we shall see in Chapter 5, it is much more complex than that.

### **Film and Media Studies and related knowledge areas: a brief analytical sketch**

It is vital that we have some grasp on the ways in which the 'studies' of specific cultural phenomena, like films, TV programmes, animation, have emerged. This is both a theoretical and an historical project. Certainly, this research project offers an attempt to theorise how knowledge emerges, fits together, overlaps, conflicts, with a view to outlining how these factors impact on Animation as a field. There is considerably more work needed, particularly some larger-scale empirical work exploring what animation practitioners and scholars actually do and how they do it. Also, we need more historical research into the emergence of programmes of study. Too often, the history of a disciplinary field is conflated with or reduced to a history of the development of the *theories* related to that field. This is part of it, of course, but only a part. We also need to examine and excavate the histories of specific courses – how they developed, where they 'came from', who taught them, to whom – as this will offer valuable clues as to why certain knowledges have developed in the ways that they have. This is



something that Dana Polan is researching in relation to the emergence of Film Studies in the USA (Polan, forthcoming). This historical work reveals the underlying patterns, assumptions and rationales of courses, and points to some of the 'breaks' and divergences that had to occur in order for certain knowledge areas to be more fully recognised.

Boyd-Barrett and Newbold (1995) come up with a useful analogy in relation to studying the media, playing on the term 'field':

If the study of media represents a 'field', it is a field with indistinct boundaries; a playing field, marked out for a variety of different games, subject to distinctive titles and rules, each game with its own painted lines, but the lines of each game overlapping those of the others. Each game also has its own spectators, and among these there are some who have come just for the game in which they have most interest, and there are others whose attention spans the field for sight of any match that looks interesting or exciting (2).

This sums up what is so dynamic and yet so messy about trying to define relationships in this area. Things are in flux, people move about, rules and regulations change. Yet the analogy is useful because it recognises that boundaries *do* exist. Even though people might traverse those boundaries with abandon, the fact is, they *are* aware that they are there. This will become increasingly important when we turn to look specifically at how Animation fits into this area. For the moment though, it is worth reiterating that we are looking at a diverse yet inter-related field.

The study of film, as Polan's research shows, has actually been around a lot longer than some people might think (the first 'photoplay study' course was founded at Columbia University in 1915). However, this course (and those that immediately followed it) needs to be distinguished from 'Film Studies' as we know it today. These first courses were very much in the mould of film 'appreciation' – which is to say, they concentrated on the aesthetic evaluation of films as 'objects'. This is a tendency in Film Studies that persists to this day, though most courses now recognise that it does not and cannot constitute the whole of a course. Or, rather, the 'aesthetic' consideration of film has ceased to be just on the level of 'appreciation', and now takes on board in more detail other factors, such as the institutional and production contexts.

In Britain, as elsewhere, the first 'serious' moves towards Film Studies as a distinct discipline were in the 1960s. Changes in the educational system at secondary level, as well as increased diversification in the tertiary sector, meant that increased engagement with popular forms like Hollywood was possible (see Cook, 2000). The tendency at this point was still for Film Studies to be conducted by people who were initially specialists elsewhere; they effectively had to 'retrain' as Film Studies practitioners. This was given additional impetus by the BFI Education Department's funding of posts during the 1970s – a number of today's key Film Studies professors were either involved in, or 'graduates' of, this system. The basic point here, then,

is that Film Studies had to forge a place for itself by attracting, training and supporting those interested parties. Often, this meant people coming from English or other subject areas, and this, in part, explains the multi-faceted aspect of the discipline. Film Studies has diversity because the 'object' of study is approachable in a multitude of ways, but it also has diversity because it has drawn in and attracted a multitude of interested parties.

As Ellis (1981) points out

Thus film brings together major concerns from a series of disciplines which usually maintain themselves largely as separate. Yet this cannot be a happy encounter: each theory or approach having its own little patch to cultivate, with film studies a benevolent landowner (33).

In many respects, this analogy is another way of saying what Boyd-Barrett and Newbold said earlier about playing fields, though it foregrounds rather more the notion of people *struggling* over terrain, in order to maintain 'their own' area. But, as Ellis continues (34), it is precisely Film Studies' ability to 'disrupt' existing disciplines that should be valued, what he describes as 'the forced marriage in film studies of different regional methodologies to give students an explicit awareness of the ways that different disciplines construct their own problematics'. In other words, '[f]ilm studies . . . tends to reveal the blindness and lacks of different disciplines by the very questions it has to ask' (ibid.). The chief example here is the way that people who study film would (now) find it remiss if such study did not include attention to the historical and industrial contexts in which films were/are produced and

consumed. This seems obvious, and should be an obvious part of any course worth its salt. Yet, as Ellis makes clear, these questions tend to remain un(der)explored in the majority of English Literature courses, where the material productive forces at play in publishing are ignored in a way that would seem unthinkable in Film Studies. So, the argument is that 'film' and its 'studies' not only have to self-consciously make elbow room for themselves, but that this is an entirely necessary and important thing to have happen. In much the same way as I am arguing for Animation Studies, we have a vital dialogical relationship with (pre)existing and cognate disciplines, which should lead to some re-evaluation on all sides.

Much of the initial work in Film Studies was very much indebted to the interpretive 'criticism' approach, adapted from Literary Studies. As Cook states, a key early text such as Robin Wood's monograph on Hitchcock (1965)

subjected [the] films to the same rigorous textual and moral analysis as was proposed for great works of literature by his mentor, the teacher and literary critic F. R. Leavis . . . [I]n so doing he both offered a particular method of film analysis and secured the director/*auteur* as a key organising principle for film study (Cook, 231).

This somewhat simplistic *auteurism* was superseded in the 1970s by a more obviously 'theoretical' paradigm, variously informed by Althusserian Marxism, structuralism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis (see Lapsley and Westlake, 1988). More recently still, scholarship has taken a turn that leans

heavily on historical and contextual analyses. Although there often seem to be specific paradigms in the ascendancy at any one time (e.g. as noted above, the 1970s seen as a time where 'Grand Theory' ruled the roost), it is actually more accurate to point to the ways in which paradigms *interact with* rather than *replace* each other. It is apparent that new technologies, when they 'arrive' do not replace older ones in a magical puff of smoke: the cinema did not immediately replace live theatre, and went on to be absorbed into its particular regime of exhibition. Similarly, television did not replace cinema, but entered into a *relationship* with it. This is the logic of 'remediation' as persuasively outlined by Bolter and Grusin (1999). My point here is that the same (or a very similar) thing happens with our ways of *understanding* the media. An 'old' theory will never entirely disappear, and may well be 'in the background', or resurface dramatically to be reapplied to a new form of media. For instance, some undergraduates might yawn at the prospect of thinking about early film theory (Eisenstein, Bazin), preferring to talk about developments in digital technologies, or the choreography of *Matrix Reloaded*. Yet, no-one talking about these latter issues can do so without an understanding of the kinds of things that Bazin was saying over half a century ago. The notion of 'reloading' or 'reconfiguring', very much in vogue due to the proliferation of computer technologies, and media events such as the *Matrix* franchise, is in fact a very apt way of thinking about the 'studies' of these areas. As 'old media' become 'new media' and these in turn become (presumably) 'newer media', existing theories and

methodologies are 'reloaded' to see what they can bring to the discipline. My point regarding animation in this context would be that it has been subjected to a similar range of analytical tools to live action film (as Mark Langer suggests in Chapter 5), but that we need to 'move beyond' these and recognise that animation can bring as much if not more to disciplinary knowledge as an understanding of live action film does. The dialectical relationship between live action and animation needs to be transposed to the ways we think about their 'respective' knowledges (indeed, we need to rethink the very idea that they have separate or 'respective' knowledges in the first place). In this respect, we will then be thinking about Animation in a way that certain people have proposed we think about Media Studies – that is, as a potentially 'macro' knowledge structure that encapsulates and vivifies (dare I say it, 'animates'?) 'other' knowledge areas.

As Alan Durant (1991) points out, 'media studies' as a field is something that can appear diffuse and to encompass a number of tendencies, emphases or 'directions'. These can take the form of an apparent 'specialisation', in one specific area of 'the media'. So, Film Studies, or Animation Studies, if we were to think of them as discrete knowledge areas, would fall into this category. Another tendency is to broaden one's horizons, and within this we get nominations such as Communications Studies and Popular Culture or Cultural Studies. There is some confusion in the sense that 'media studies' (lower case) as a knowledge area (or 'field', to use the

analogy from earlier) appears to encapsulate things like Film Studies, or Film and Television Studies, or the variants that might appear in these categories, and also encapsulates Media Studies (upper case), as well as the admittedly broader disciplinary structures like Cultural Studies. This is where thinking of different *tendencies* within an area is sometimes helpful – in that there can be a ‘Communications Studies’-inflected version of Media (or Film) Studies, or a ‘Cultural Studies’-inflected version of the same. This is why I stated at the start of this chapter that we would inevitably fail in trying to disentangle the various areas with any certainty. It is not so much the successful disentanglement that we are after, as the recognition that these things *are* entangled in the first place.

As is apparent from other chapters (see, in particular, Chapter 8) the issue of nomenclature is important in the sense that it defines and determines what we do, and with whom we do it. This is not an overly deterministic point, of course, suggesting that we are forced against our will to study or teach what the ‘name’ of our area tells us to. If nothing else, this thesis argues that people do play a role in shaping what knowledge areas are, but that they need to be reflexive about the material forces at play. So, thinking about what one calls what one does, is important. For example, ‘Cinema Studies’, as we shall see, now might seem like a strangely outdated label for a lot of people who would say they were teaching ‘Film’. The simple answer is of course to change the name to something like

‘Screen Studies’, ‘Screen Media’ (which would take in film, TV, computers, videogames . . .) or ‘Moving Image Studies’ perhaps (which would take in all of these, plus things like virtual reality). What sounds like pedantry is actually a very important call for knowledge areas to reflect carefully on their origins and their futures.

The concept of multimodality (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001) is useful here. This stresses the ‘many-layeredness’ of contemporary communication, and the fact that all communication takes place in ‘interpretive communities’. But not only that: the broad social semiotics framework in which the work on multimodality has been executed means that the meaning(s) of specific discourses (in this case, the nomenclature and specialist labels of academic courses) must be read as part of a *social* process, a *material* context. Thus, we are revisiting what I was arguing about knowledge-in-general in Chapter 1, regarding the ‘social situatedness’ of knowledge.

There are two other related and very interesting concepts that Kress and Van Leeuwen point to in their discussion, terms that I shall introduce here and return to in subsequent chapters. First of all, they point towards

[d]iscourses which are still in the process of being elaborated and have not yet become common sense and subject to what Bourdieu has referred to as ‘genesis amnesia’ (Kress and Van Leeuwen: 11).



'Genesis amnesia' is the phenomenon whereby a set of social practices (what Bourdieu, 1977 terms 'habitus') become so 'familiar' (i.e. common sense) that people 'forget' where such practices came from, how they evolved and, more to the point that they *are* actually social practices, sets of conventions that can, given the will, be changed. In other words, such processes become naturalised or reified. This notion of 'genesis amnesia' is very useful in thinking through how disciplines and related knowledges develop and operate. My argument is that we should strive to avoid such amnesia – which amounts to a forgetting of the roots of specific knowledge areas. Furthermore, Animation's status as a 'discourse still in the process of being elaborated' (certainly in relation to recent developments in digital culture but also, I would argue, more generally too) makes keeping in view the 'genesis' of Animation even more imperative. I return to this point below, when considering how recent digital culture has reconfigured the study of Film, Media and Animation, and how the last of these must be seen as the key to a better understanding of all of these inter-related areas.

The second concept that Kress and Van Leeuwen point to is 'framing'.<sup>1</sup> They talk about how framing, in the context of reading visual communication, is vital because it refers to 'the way elements of a visual composition may be disconnected, marked off from each other' (2). Conversely, it may also refer to 'the ways in which elements of a

composition may be connected to each other, through the absence of disconnection devices' (ibid). They then state:

The significance is that disconnected elements will be read as, in some sense, separate and independent, perhaps even as contrasting units of meaning, whereas connected elements will be read as belonging together in some sense, as continuous or complementary (ibid).

Although they are talking about framing in relation to visual composition, they then say '[b]ut clearly framing is a multimodal principle' (3). In other words, 'framing' impinges on our lives in many other ways. This much is clear from Bernstein's use of the same term (along with 'classification') in his discussion of curricula and their transmission (see Chapter 2).

The splitting into various types of 'Studies' to approaching media and cultural artefacts also needs to be thought about from a methodological perspective. This further complicates the issues. We can think in a fairly straightforward way about what it is we are studying, the objects, but this might draw us to a false conclusion or only give us part of the picture. As I point out elsewhere in this project, animation is such a diverse form that it is unsurprising that there are many different ways to study it. Yet the same can be said of many other forms, and this leads us to a fundamental split in the field that is crucial to an understanding of it. Broadly speaking, this is the split between what John Corner (1995) terms 'criticism' and 'sociology', which I return to below when discussing Corner's remarks about 'the

knowledge problem' of Media Studies. It is also a split that needs to be thought through in relation to the skills discourse of training or vocationalism, something which is writ large through most Media courses of one kind or another, and Animation courses in particular (see chapter 6).

### **Media Studies and the 'knowledge problem'**

John Corner approaches this issue by talking about the 'knowledge problem' of Media Studies. By knowledge problem he means 'what it is that academic inquiries seek to find out, and the kinds and quality of data and of explanatory relations which particular ideas and methods might be expected to produce' (Corner 1995: 147). In short, he is concerned with the epistemological bases of Media Studies. His analysis engages with the difficulties of interdisciplinarity and hierarchies of knowledge in that he discusses to what extent Media Studies 'constitute[s] itself as a unified project of inquiry' (ibid.). Can it be unified if it 'draws on directly, or else shadows . . . concepts and methods developed in the primary disciplines'? The issue here then is whether an area such as Media Studies can have generalisable findings (and methods), when it is perhaps nothing more than 'an aggregation of inquiries'. This, in turn, means that there can be no core knowledge to speak of - and it is precisely this core knowledge which is central to planning, devising, delivering and assessing the academic programmes.

This notion of the study of media/cultural artefacts, processes and institutions as being at the intersection of a number of 'primary' areas of knowledge or disciplines is a pervasive one. Indeed, it is difficult to see it as otherwise, seeing as the terrain of Media Studies in particular can be approached from a number of different standpoints. This is essentially to do with the historical development of the area, something which, broadly speaking, balances between the two poles of what Corner terms 'criticism' and 'sociology'. The former sees knowledge as 'the product of sustained analytic attention and intellection', where the drive is for originality of thought within a hermeneutical framework: in other words, what is rewarded is the individualised, subjective critique. (The danger with this is that, if taken to its logical conclusion, it can be reductively deployed to state that it's 'all just a matter of opinion', and any claims to knowledge are relativised out of sight. It is also worth noting that a methodology which privileges 'originality' to such an extent is highly likely to fall prey to empty-headed calls for 'new' ideas, which perhaps have as much to do with a kind of educational fashion as they do with progressing knowledge. There is no point moving on to 'new' ideas if we have yet to understand the 'old' ones). The latter of Corner's categories is an empirical project which generates 'data' about the subject at hand, and thus has more in common with 'scientific' method. Although interpretation still plays a part (as it does in all science: data must be interpreted), there are clearly claims to objectivity and testability which do not trouble those carrying out the first project. This

bifurcation of the intellectual area known as Media Studies makes it, at one and the same time, stimulating and frustrating - particularly if one is trying to delineate how it all fits together.

Douglas Kellner, in an online essay entitled 'Communications vs. Cultural Studies: Overcoming the Divide', identifies a similar distinction in the field he labels 'communications studies'. He states:

Of course, all academic disciplinary divisions are arbitrary, subject to power relations and contingencies of specific institutions. Yet it seems that the identity of the field of communications studies is particularly tenuous, conflicted, and uncertain. Such disciplinary uncertainty and anxiety over the domain of communications leads to . . . narrow and rigid disciplinary definitions. ('Communications')

What Kellner identifies is much the same phenomenon as Comer in relation to 'Media Studies'. He continues

[there is] a current disciplinary crisis in the study of media communications that has emerged from its bifurcation into two separate domains, the fields of mass-mediated communication contrasted with cultural studies. These divisions of the field employ two different methods drawn from the opposing academic sites of the humanities and social sciences (ibid.).

Very similar 'problems' are evident in relation to Animation Studies, and this is borne out by the comments discussed in subsequent chapters. The 'problems' faced by Animation Studies are not exactly the same though, but it is instructive to keep Kellner's points in mind because he makes explicit that what could be a healthy *diversity* more often than not will manifest itself

as a 'bifurcation' or schism of some kind. Such a bifurcation has arguably taken place in relation to theoretical and practical approaches to media, and I argue in Chapter 6 that this split is especially interesting in relation to Animation. But it is certainly true that the 'divide' between the humanities and social sciences – with both having their 'own version' of how to look at, analyse, or appreciate media artefacts – can be a major stumbling block for what I would call *integrated analysis*. This is the kind of approach that learns from and uses methodologies on either side of this divide, and attempts to synthesise from them. As Kellner makes clear, these are 'opposing academic sites', and the adversarial attitude can sometimes be wearing (a colleague of mine, a Sociologist, who shall remain nameless, once got very upset when I said I was going to be using email interviews for my research into Animation. Apparently, this was a method 'reserved' for 'proper' Sociology). On the other hand, one can find very useful and reciprocated points of contact. But the point remains: we have to recognise that there is a schism or divide there and find ways of 'dealing' with it. Seeing it as a 'fault line', where supposed opposites are meeting, gives it a dynamism where conflict and contradiction can be examined rather than denied.

Another way in which fault lines or divisions make themselves felt in this research is apparent when we turn to examine the ontological status of various types of imagery (photographic, live action, CGI, animated). They

overlap, they blur. Increasingly, it is difficult to state definitively *what kind* of image something might be. If we have certain knowledge areas whose job it is to 'explain' certain types of media practice, certain types of artefact, and so on, then it would be safe to assume that, as the things themselves become more and more convergent or difficult to distinguish from one another, then the explanatory apparatuses we have will also blur and overlap to a great degree. This is an area to which we now turn, in relation to the role of new technology.

### **New technologies/new paradigms?**

It will become apparent in Chapter 4 that defining animation is far from as straightforward as it appears. For now, I just want to make some observations about how the overlap and convergence between animation and live action needs to be viewed as an epistemological and pedagogic problem, as much as it is an ontological one. As we move to redefine what things are and how they relate to one another, we need increasingly sophisticated theoretical paradigms to be able to cope with these redefinitions. Recent work (e.g. the 'Cinema: Dead or Alive?' symposium at the University of London, February 2003) has discussed the ways that changing technologies have refigured our understanding of cinema. But also, crucially, they have re-evaluated existing theories in the light of new developments. For instance, Ian Christie's reading of the 'moment' of early cinema, and how it and its related theories can be used to critically evaluate

recent developments in new technologies. Much of the discourse being used today in relation to 'new' technologies has an obvious antecedent in what was said about the cinematograph when *it* first appeared.

Similarly, one has to recognise that any study of new developments in media will most likely be grappling with issues that are central to animation. The role of special effects and digital imagery is a case in point, as recent work by David Rodowick (unpublished paper, 2002) has made clear. His thoughts on how the apparent 'disappearance' of 'film' (which is to say, that stable, recognisable object that is the celluloid film strip) has impacted on 'Cinema Studies' are particularly relevant to this discussion. As analogue media have been gradually (now increasingly) replaced by digital media, both digital origination and storage etc, he argues that this has, paradoxically, made the need for the manifest strengths of Film Studies (to be more precise, he talks of 'film theory') to be recognised and acknowledged. Rodowick's argument suggests that 'new media' and the people who study it need 'film theory' more than ever: '[t]he history of film and film theory thus becomes the most productive conceptual horizon against which we can assess both what is new, and yet very old, in the new media'. It is because Cinema Studies (and Rodowick makes the differences and similarities between 'film' and 'cinema' central to his paper) 'has persisted in a continual state of identity crisis' during the 20<sup>th</sup> century - to the extent that 'the history of film theory in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was



largely a matter of playing catch-up' – that it retains such power as a paradigm through which to analyse more recent technological developments. In short, if we harbour 'uncertainties' about particular media artefacts (what, exactly, *is* this?) then what better way to engage with and analyse them than by using a paradigm that has suffered, and arguably come to live with, the very 'identity crisis' to which Rodowick alludes?

It is the inherent *reflexiveness* of a discipline like Film Studies that gives it its potency; this is something I am arguing is even more the case for Animation Studies, precisely because the latter makes us (re)interrogate some of the bases of the former. If that former (i.e. Film Studies) is *already* forcing us to interrogate certain key issues (and Rodowick is surely correct when he argues this), then this results in a doubly interrogated field. Of course, this complexity and questioning can lead us to a sense of frustration and fragmentation, or to disappear up our interrogative fundaments. But it is surely better to have a constantly questioned and questioning field of knowledge, than one that 'takes things for granted'? (The notion of naturalisation and Bourdieu's 'genesis amnesia' are apparent again). And the important thing to note is that this questioning 'nature' of film as a discipline stems from its need to *legitimise* its activities. Thus:

In its historical efforts to define film as art, and thus to legitimate a new field of aesthetic analysis, never has one field so thoroughly debated, in such contradictory and interesting ways, the nature of its ontological grounding (ibid).

In other words, we are talking about a return to the nagging question ‘What is cinema?’ – which could easily be rephrased to ask the same question of Animation. Indeed, I would suggest that it is the terrain of Animation on which we must now talk about many of the issues to which Rodowick gestures.

The defining of animation and Animation Studies (something I return to in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively) can therefore only be accomplished in relation to other disciplines like Film Studies and Media Studies. This is not just a grand, ontological question either. I would suggest that ‘microanalyses’ of specific examples (e.g. the place of animation within specific production-distribution-exhibition regimes (see Ward, 2000), or what it is that particular teachers of animation do, and how they define themselves in relation to others) are also key issues. The issues raised by thinking about Animation from a multimodal perspective are what will concern us in the remainder of this research: the ways that Animation frames and at the same time is framed; the way that it discursively engages with a wide range of other knowledges; the ways in which the manifold approaches to ‘teaching Animation’ can be reconciled.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has offered a brief and necessarily incomplete overview of some of the historical aspects of the emergence of Film Studies and Media

Studies. The point has not been to outline this in any detail, but rather to discuss some of the ways that these inter-related fields of knowledge have changed and evolved over time. Moreover, the suggestion is that we need to understand these areas, if we are to have any chance of talking coherently about Animation. This is not to say that Animation Studies is, in a simple, straightforward way, 'part of' or reducible to Film or Media Studies. This is very far from what I am arguing, as is evident from other chapters. But the *relationships* between these areas are vital to grasping any of them individually. Indeed, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, we should cease to try and simply disentangle these knowledge areas from one another. As Dana Polan, writing in 1987, points out 'the term film theory today can only be a convenient fiction, holding a number of approaches in a complicated space'. He continues that 'to be most useful, film theory should cease to exist as such'. Over a decade and a half later, this notion of seeing film theory as a 'convenient fiction' seems more appropriate than ever. It always existed as a flag of convenience, and it is now one that, in the light of some of the technological changes occurring right now, should be reconfigured to more actively and reflexively engage with issues and debates that might seem to be more 'at home' within Animation Studies. The 'knowledge problems' of these inter-related fields are, unsurprisingly, entangled. It is vital that, as well as getting excited by the possibilities that new technologies are offering, we do not forget that existing (and, in some cases, what might seem like ancient) ideas and methodologies are not

forgotten. The analogies alluded to here – playing fields containing lots of different games at any one time, a meeting of ‘patches’ of disciplines, with Film Studies as an overseer/landowner – are useful, certainly. But the key way to rethink our approaches to knowledge and disciplines in this extraordinarily complex arena is the notion of remediation as outlined by Bolter and Grusin. Not only are new technologies remediating existing media, but this also means that we need to do our best to remediate the analytical tools we have at our disposal too.

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of the ‘frame’ in relation to Animation is also explored in a very interesting way by Alan Cholodenko. See his *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, or The Framing of Animation’ (1991).

## **Chapter 4**

### **Definitions of animation**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter I shall outline some of the issues that arise from defining animation. Clearly, if we are to understand how and why animation is to be taught, we need to firstly understand what animation actually is. This is by no means as straightforward as it sounds. As we shall see, 'animation' is a term that potentially covers a large number of diverse practices, and this can lead to some confusion (different people calling the same thing by different names, defining it as animation or not, and so on). This confusion and argument is amplified by animation's relationship with live action filmmaking which, although subject to changes through history, has almost totally been characterised as a subordinate one in one way or another.

First of all, I shall offer a sketch of different types of animation. Once I have done this, I shall summarise some of the conceptual and theoretical problems concerned with defining animation. This will include some discussion of the different reasons for wanting to define animation - e.g. industrial, philosophical, ontological. The distinction between live action filmmaking and animation is central to all of this discussion, and particular attention will need to be paid to the interface between live action and computer generated imagery (CGI). This is where animation can be seen to

be 'bolstering' the authenticity and verisimilitude of live action spectacle. So much so, that a lot of 'animation' is literally invisible and passed off as if it were live action. The very close (inextricable?) relationship that exists between animation and special effects has a long and complex history which requires more careful description and explanation. Too often, a simplistic model is set up which positions live action as the bearer of an 'authenticity', while animation is the realm of cinematic magic, with the two meeting in the realm of special effects. This needs to be more carefully considered, the respective ontologies more clearly mapped out. The convergence and overlap between animation and live action will be explored via a case study of *Waking Life* (2001) and the so-called 'Rotoshop' technique, leading to discussion of animation's ability to represent 'the real'.

### **Types of animation**

First of all, we need to sketch the variety of different types of animation. There have been various ways of mapping out the diverse area known as animation, some of which I shall discuss below. For instance, Wells (1998) distinguishes between orthodox, developmental, and experimental forms of animation. He sees

orthodox and experimental animation as opposing but related forms. Developmental animation operates as a mode of expression combining or selecting elements of both approaches, representing the aesthetic and philosophic tension between the two apparent extremes (35).

In other words, we can define a mass-produced, 'mainstream' type of animation as orthodox, a type of animation that explores form, materiality and the position of the animator (among other things) as experimental, and where the two tendencies meet can be termed developmental animation. Although there can be problems with this typology (and Wells himself refers to it as 'tentative' (35)), it is useful in the sense that it highlights the *relative* nature of animation techniques and forms. This is something we return to below.

Another key way of differentiating types of animation is to separate 2D and 3D techniques. Here, drawn animation, and certain computer animation working in two dimensions, is seen as essentially different from animation that exists in three dimensions, such as object, puppet, 'clay' (i.e. Plasticene), or certain 3D computer animation. My typology is partly based on the 2D/3D distinction, but also emphasises the specifics of particular techniques (i.e. use of paint, models, computer software). The idea is to offer an outline that allows us to discuss techniques relative to one another, but then locate them in the broader debates about the 'essence'<sup>1</sup> of animation, rather than becoming too entangled in a discussion of animation as a set of techniques. (This is something that has hampered discussion of animation in the past - a concentration on the technical details, rather than the *basis*, though the two do overlap to some degree).

## **a) Drawing- or painting-based animation**

### **(i) Cel animation**

This is by far and away the 'dominant' kind of animation historically. Elements of the drawn action are separated out onto different sheets of celluloid - the backgrounds on one, the various body parts on others. This allows those parts of the action that are regularly changing due to movement to be redrawn and replaced without the unchanging parts like the backgrounds having to be redrawn. As well as streamlining production, it had implications for the overall 'look' and institutional position of the resulting 'cartoons'. Although technological advances might have changed the actual production process (e.g. computers are increasingly used during otherwise 'cel'-produced animated films), it has to be said that 'cel' has come to mean more than simply the process. It can often be used interchangeably (and therefore somewhat inaccurately) with the term 'cartoon'. This process has become almost indistinguishable from a certain kind of animation, most associated with Disney and Warner Bros. Complications arise when an animated film that is technologically discrete from cel in terms of production process (e.g. the computer-animated *Toy Story* films) can be seen to be in the *tradition* of cel-animated films. That is, *Toy Story* is 'cartoonal' in its structure and ambitions (albeit a feature-length cartoon) because it is, broadly speaking, narrative-driven, *character animation*.



There are various precursors to cel animation - e.g. Barre's 'slash' system, McCay's 'retracing' method (see Crafton 1993). Although these can be seen as 'precursors' to cel, there is a sense that they 'live on' to some extent in modern-day 'line' animation. This is a technique where drawings are done on paper and each one is then photographed to make up the final film. In this respect, line animation is very close to the 'pencil-test' stage of full-blown cel animation (although this is a stage of cel animation that is now carried out on a computer). Where it differs is in the technological (and economic) investment: instead of cels there are (re)drawings. What these two types of animation have in common is that they are based on drawing/painting. Both typically use a technique known as 'pose-to-pose', where the main poses of a character - those that best signify the movement (a run, a jump, a change in facial expression) - are drawn first. Once the extremes of this A to B movement are mapped out, the drawings that *get us* from A to B (known as 'in-betweens') can then be done. The emphasis is therefore on the *extremes* of movement (which perhaps explains the exaggerated look of much cartoon animation) rather than any incremental 'build up' of motion, as seen in other techniques.

#### **(ii) 'Subtractive' painting method**

If not invented by Caroline Leaf, this was certainly developed into an art form by her. Instead of drawings on paper, or cels that are photographed,

this technique consists of a piece of glass on which scenes are rendered in paint and photographed. The crucial difference is that each new 'frame' obliterates or 'replaces' the previous one - the transition or 'in-between' is *metamorphosis* rather than a literal 'replacement'. (The concept of metamorphosing is central to animation – see Sobchack 2000. The concept of 'obliteration' brings to mind 'negation', which is something that Esther Leslie (2002) argues is central to all animation. I return to these points below). In this respect, the finished film is the repository of a series of paintings that no longer exist anywhere but in the film itself. (As opposed to cel or line animation, where the 'original' artwork is simply put to one side, and can often reappear for sale as a collector's item). As noted above, the most famous proponent of this technique is American Caroline Leaf (e.g. *The Street* 1976); another example is South African William Kentridge (e.g. *History of the Main Complaint* 1996). A variation of this technique, also done by Leaf, is animating via sand on glass. The same principle (i.e. metamorphosis) applies as for paint.

### **(iii) Direct animation**

This covers a range of techniques which have in common the direct treatment of film, either by painting or scratching or otherwise marking the surface of the celluloid. This is another technique used by Norman McLaren (though not invented by him): he wrote a good deal about so-called 'cameraless' animation (see McLaren, NFBC production notes). Such

techniques obviously differ from those sketched out so far in the sense that the cinematographic process does not intervene at all (except at the point of projection). The commonality is the frame by frame procedure: the animator's scratching and/or painting onto the film itself is clearly done frame by frame and any animated movement registers accordingly. An example of this kind of animation is Caroline Leaf's *Two Sisters* (1990). As Furniss notes (41), Leaf's technique here was to work with large format film stock (70mm), divided into two strips. On one strip she had odd-numbered frames (1, 3, 5, 7 etc.), and on the other were even-numbered frames (2, 4, 6, 8 etc.). This allowed her to peg out the strips of film on a light table and scratch the imagery, then *overlay* consecutive frames and continue the animation. Clearly then, the frame-lines and their registration are central to such a technique.

A variation on this is the technique where one long strip of celluloid, minus the frame lines, is used. Invariably, these animations are abstract (e.g. *Begone Dull Care* (McLaren, 1949)) or an interplay of abstract and figurative (e.g. *Hen Hop* (McLaren, 1942)). McLaren also explored ways of animating sound that used basic 'direct' techniques (such as scratching or in some other way registering a pattern on the soundtrack of a piece of film). All of the methods in this general area have in common an artisanal mode of production (though they could in principle be adapted for production line strategies, the tendency has been for single artists like Leaf,

McLaren, or Len Lye to produce films on their own).

### **b) Object animation/stop-motion techniques**

This is a wide-ranging sub-category including the manipulation of real/pre-existing objects, and also puppets, cut -outs and other figures. It therefore covers the 'claymation' of Aardman (e.g. *Chicken Run* 2000) or Will Vinton (e.g. *Closed Mondays* 1974), as well as the pixilation seen in McLaren's *Neighbours* (1952) or the Bolex Brothers' *The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb* (1993). Also included here is the work of Jan Svankmajer, who uses pixilation of real human figures with the stop-motion manipulation of everyday objects like vegetables, furniture etc., and the puppetry of someone like Jiri Tmka. Although there is a vast range here in the sense of *what* is being manipulated (from complicated puppets and Plasticene figures, to everyday objects and 'real' people), the commonality here is that the animation is created frame by frame by moving objects and things in tiny increments. The analogy with drawn or painted animation is clear enough: instead of replacing or redrawing a picture and *thereby* moving the motion on incrementally, the camera is stopped and a tiny adjustment is made to the position of the object or puppet or person.

It is worth stressing here that there are certain kinds of film that appear to use animation of this sort, but (perhaps) do not. It is of course possible to have *apparently* animated figures in a film - usually alongside real human

characters filmed in conventional live action - where the 'animatedness' of the characters is used to mark them out as different. For instance, those films that use Jim Henson's creations are making use of sometimes incredibly detailed puppetry. The crucial distinction here is that such 'animatronics' is shot in live action, and the apparently animated movement is achieved in real time. A film like Joe Dante's *Small Soldiers* (1998) uses a combination of live-action-based animatronics, and conventional stop-motion animation (and probably some computer animation too). The 'Dynamation' of Ray Harryhausen - seen in films like *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) - is another example of the combination of live action-shot actors with stop-motion figures. In Harryhausen's method, this combination of live action with stop motion model work is achieved via the special effect of matte work, where the two types of filming are done separately and then combined via optical printing.

### **c) Computer animation**

A great deal of animation currently uses computers, though not all of it would be termed 'computer animation'. We need to distinguish between the use of a computer as *part of* an established animation process (e.g. using computers to run the modern-day equivalent of pencil tests, used in cel animation), and animation which is 'properly' computerised. The digital rendering seen in films like *Toy Story* (1995), *Shrek* (2000) and *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (2001) are all manifestations of computer

animation. Having said this, the technical dimension may well rely on computers, but the mode of representation in each of these is a hybrid that borrows from the 'cartoonal' tradition (the feature-length, character animation pioneered by Disney) but attempts to eerily mimic the textures of even more 'realistic' representations. The questions of 'realism' in such contexts have been addressed by Darley (2000), amongst others, and I discuss the issue of computer animation, CGI special effects and realism below. The discussion will also take on board the ways in which ostensibly live action films use a great deal of animation; so much so that controversies abound concerning the ontological status of the image, or of particular performances. (Here I am thinking of Gollum in *Lord of the Rings*: the human performer, Andy Serkis, was effaced from the performance by the privileging of discourses around the computer wizardry involved, and the awarding of a best Digital Performance Oscar at the Academy Awards). The other main areas relevant to this section are videogames, which clearly are a form of animation (Ward 2002), and those traditions of computer animation that belong in the avant-garde, where what is animated is non-representational and experimental (e.g. the work of James Whitney).

#### **d) Other techniques**

Although it is technically-speaking a form of drawn animation, I feel that rotoscoped films need to be separated off into a category that recognises their difference. Rotoscoping basically involves taking conventional live

action footage and 'treating' it by tracing over each individual frame. This raises some interesting issues about the films' status - are they live action? are they animation? can they simply be described as a 'hybrid' of the two? - to which I shall return below. Indeed, it is the fact that rotoscoping seems to be 'between' techniques that makes it worthy of particular discussion: I shall return to this in my case study of Richard Linklater's *Waking Life* (2001).

### **Problems with 'essentialist' readings**

Now that we have outlined some of the various types of animation, with a perhaps unavoidable emphasis on the different *techniques* used, we now need to develop an understanding of how animation can be talked of in an essentialist way, and how thinking about it in this way can be problematic. It is one thing to discuss the differences inherent in using different techniques and technologies, but if we are to successfully grasp what animation is, we need to grapple with some complex philosophical questions. Bazin (1967) famously talked of the 'ontology of the photographic image' and by extension the ontological status of the cinematic image. What we need to do here is delineate the ontology of the animated image. This is made more problematic by the overlaps between these three realms (the photographic, the cinematic, the animatic). What precisely is there that is essential to animation, that isn't to photography or cinematography? Some might say the 'graphic' status of the images, in that they are drawn. But what of pixillated animation, or puppets, or computer animation, none of which use

drawings? Some others might say it is the frame-by-frame process that distinguishes animation from the other areas. But photography is nothing if not shooting one frame at a time, and cinematography is simply a series of still photos, shot and then presented in sequence and at a certain speed. The more one looks into the actual basis of animation, the more difficult it apparently becomes to disentangle it, with any certainty, from its near-neighbours. In short, we need to recognise that talking about animation as if it is a discrete form, somehow separable from still and live action forms, might be the root of some of the problems.

In discussing the ontology of the animated image, we need to look at certain important areas. I have already noted the importance of the area most often described as 'special effects', although it is with no little irony that a good number of live action films can currently be said to be using animated special effects as a way of adding to the *authenticity* and *veracity* of their image. Which is to say: the 'special' effect is in a sense used to add to the 'ordinariness' of the image. The digital imagery used in a film like *Titanic* (1999) is never meant to be recognised for what it is (animation); it is there purely to shore up the film's spectacular verisimilitude. Even a film like *The Phantom Menace* (2000), whilst clearly a sci-fi fantasy, still uses computer-generated animation to add to its *relative* 'realism'. By this I mean, the audience is never really taking the animation in such a film as animation: it is simply the best filmmaking technique to render the required



paradox - believably unbelievable characters. This is what is meant by the 'ordinariness' of the image. Certainly, a film like *The Phantom Menace* offers an *extraordinary* world in many respects, but in terms of what is expected from this kind of film, there is a 'yardstick' of expectations (or 'ordinariness') to live up to. As pointed out in the Introduction, a good deal of contemporary animation can therefore be invisible, as no-one discusses it as animation. The recent furore over the character of Gollum in *Lord of the Rings* offers a slightly different, if still instructive, example. This character was performed by an actor (Andy Serkis) wearing a specially-designed suit. The 'realness' of the actor allowed him to interact with fellow performers in a way that a fully digital creation could not. However, the extent to which digital manipulation had taken place was such that the status of Serkis's performance was debated. One result was that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences refused to recognise Serkis as the 'actor' in this scenario; a new Oscar category, Best Digital Performance, was created (Askwith 2003). This whole episode suggests that in future there will be more widespread 'recognition' of certain grey areas. At present there are processes such as 'digital grading', where images are manipulated a frame at a time, as well as situations like that encountered by Serkis (and many other examples of computer animated trickery being passed off 'as if' it were live action), which are destabilising commonsense notions of what constitutes animation, what it *is* and what it is not.

A converse impulse is that seen in recent computer animation (*Toy Story* et al), where the special effect, the spectacle, is the notion of an increased realism itself - we are asked to marvel at how a completely created (i.e. computer-generated) world can so eerily mimic our expectations of the 'real world' (which is to say: our experience of other mediated 'versions' of the world, such as other films - whether animated or live action - computer games etc.). What these two impulses have in common is that they have at their centre a paradox: in one, special effects can become, or be in the service of, the 'ordinary'; in the other, the 'ordinary' (in the sense of the textures of 'everyday' life) itself becomes a form of special effect. (For a discussion of these issues in relation to computer game animation, see Ward 2002). Such a paradox really returns us to the ways that animation cannot really be considered as 'separate' from other kinds of moving image generation; it is too closely implicated. For this reason, we must revisit and try to further develop a typology in which animation can be discussed.

There have been some attempts to develop a typology of animation (e.g. Wells 1998), or explain where animation 'fits in with' other moving images (Furniss 1998). The main problem appears to be animation's diversity: how to define it, 'fix' it in a conceptual universe, when it seems to be such an elastic and multiform concept? How can we talk of animation's 'essence' when it is so diverse? Indeed, discussion of animation can

sometimes fall into a form of relativism, where its champions point to what they see as animation's main strengths, usually implicitly held up against animation's bogey-man, live action. For instance, Alexander Alexeieff pointed to the multiplicity of possibilities open to animation as a form, stating that 'contrary to live action cinema' this is predicated upon 'a raw material made exclusively of human ideas, those ideas that different animators have about things' (quoted in Wells: 7). As Wells goes on to point out, the problem with this is that it sets up animation as a kind of 'anything goes' forum:

In emphasising the human aspects informing the uniqueness of animation Alexeieff ironically highlights the illusiveness [sic] of the form. A first inspection seems to reveal that there are as many individual styles and approaches as there are individual animators, all engaged in the creation of an animated film. How then, is it possible, to address 'animation' given its apparent difference and multiplicity? (ibid.)

In other words, animation is the realm of 'individual' artists, so it is not surprising that there seem to be many different kinds of animation. Animation seems limited only by the people who are actually practising it.

It is certainly the case that animation is often talked about in such 'individualist' terms, and this has important consequences for how we understand it as an epistemological and pedagogical field. Such valorisation of the individual artist-animator masks real contextual factors - for example, industrial, economic, cultural, and ideological factors. And we still have to face up to the fact that there must be some essential, fundamental defining

features that decide whether or not what someone is 'doing' (or watching) is animation in the first place. Beneath the apparent endless diversity, there *must* be some commonalities, otherwise there would be no concept at all of a 'field' that may or may not be called animation.

Wells suggests that the route through this is to seek 'a number of ways in which any animated film may be addressed and analysed' (ibid.). In other words, his answer is to come up with a set of methodological procedures by which we can analyse 'animation'. This effectively side-steps the problem of actually defining animation in the first place, and leaves us at the same conceptual impasse that confronted those genre theorists who first noted the so-called 'empiricist dilemma'. That is, in order to discuss this thing called animation we first of all need to isolate a set of films that are definable as animation, but in order to isolate the films, we need to know what principles and features allow us to label these particular films as animation.

The one thing that all writers on animation seem to agree on as a fundamental feature of animation is that they are films that are created 'frame by frame'. As Furniss points out though (4-5), this is hardly enough on its own. Pointing to Small and Levinson's rather laborious journey (1989) to the definition 'the technique of single-frame cinematography', she states 'such a simplistic definition provides the reader with only the most basic

characteristic of the practice' (5). Moving on to cite Solomon (1987), she adds what is the other crucial element of a working definition of animation. The images, as already noted, are recorded frame by frame, but crucially 'the illusion of motion is created, rather than recorded' (ibid.). Both of these factors are fundamental to animation as it is commonly understood.

The frame by frame process is not enough by itself if we consider for a moment the apparatus of live action cinema. Here, actions are 'played out' or 'performed' for the camera - the so-called 'pro-filmic' events are captured in order that they may be projected later. However, even though the actions will be performed 'live', their capture is via a series of stills - or 'frame by frame' - and our perception of them as 'live action' has everything to do with the physiological 'trick' that our brain plays on us, so that we see what are a series of stills as a continuous movement. The difference resides not in the 'stillness' or otherwise of the images, but in the way they are captured and re-presented to us (usually at 24 or 25 fps).

We need to turn to one of the most celebrated of animators, Norman McLaren, for a more complex - and justly famous - summation of the key to animation:

Animation is not the art of drawings that move but the art of movements that are drawn; What happens between each frame is much more important than what exists on each frame; Animation is therefore the art of manipulating the invisible interstices that lie between the frames (quoted in Furniss, 5).

This concentration on the 'between', the interstices, is the fundamental point. As Furniss says 'McLaren is not defining the practice of animation, but rather its essence' (ibid.). In other words, he has hit the ontological nail on the head. Whether the animated material is drawn (something that *may* or *may not* be central to an animation: although McLaren seems to suggest that drawing is essential, as Furniss indicates, his use of the term was rhetorical rather than a reference to actual drawing) or objects, models, puppets, clay, or (more interestingly) computer images, the essential defining feature is that these things do not move 'on their own', but their movement is *created* frame by frame, and that a whole lot goes on 'in between' each frame.

An illuminating analogy might be the difference between someone doing a whole set of drawings that represent a sequence of movements (a man running, for instance), and then doing two separate films of these drawings. The first would be a 'conventional' animated film - that is, each single drawing would be placed and registered on a peg-bar and a 'single frame' would be shot.<sup>2</sup> That drawing would then be removed, replaced with the next in the sequence, a single frame taken, and the process repeated until all the drawings were shot. When projected, this should result in an animated film of the running man. Compare this with the artist taking the same drawings and creating a flip book. In close up, so that the book fills

the frame (and, for the sake of argument, means we cannot see the artist's hands), the flipping process is filmed in 'conventional' live action. The resulting film would look remarkably similar to the film shot using the frame by frame process, but there is a qualitative difference in the production process. The first procedure is characterised by discontinuity, the second by a continuity of motion - the illusion of movement is 'performed' for, and captured by, the camera, rather than the discontinuous, 'in-between'-filled process used in the frame by frame technique. There are 'in-betweens' in the live action mode of shooting, but they are tiny fractions of a second, simply the time it takes for the shutter to close and reopen as the frame lines pass through.

McLaren's identification of the 'in-between' as being central to animation points to its aesthetic and political potential. As Esther Leslie (2002) has suggested, animation is based on *negation*, it is a transformative art form, and it is surely something that foregrounds human agency. That is, the plasmatic nature of animation – the morphs, rapid shifts, condensations – and the fact that it is predicated on movement, replacement, obliteration means it is potentially a radical form. The 'objectivity' of the photographic/cinematographic, as espoused by Bazin, tends to rest on the machinery 'stepping between' the person and what they are attempting to represent. With animation it is certainly not the case that there is no mediation occurring, but it appears that the process of animation tends to

foreground the human agency involved in *transforming* raw material (whether this is via tropes such as rotoscoping, or the hand of the artist, or the uncanny device of puppetry or pixillation). It is also the case that animation tends to foreground debates about how technology impacts on technique (this is something I return to in Chapter 9).

### **Theoretical and conceptual problems with defining animation**

After exploring some of the ontological issues pertaining to animation, we now need to attempt to locate these thoughts in a broader context. That is, the concept of animation needs to be addressed in its specific relationships with other types of filmmaking, taking on board such factors as institutional and historical position. This includes thinking through animation's place in relation to film and media, as an object of study.

Much work on film, television and other media tends to suggest that things can be easily divided up into discrete areas. That there might be occasional 'overlap' or 'hybridity' but that we can more or less point to definable genres, types, or production processes, that they can be isolated and thereby studied and understood. One such certainty is that 'animation' can be clearly understood as separate from other forms of moving (or still) image. It is commonsense that it is a discrete mode with its own production processes, signification strategies and meaningfulness to its specific audiences. Moreover, that it therefore has its own 'essence' or ontology,



which will mean, in turn, that it has its own epistemological and pedagogical procedures (that is, its 'specificity' means that it constitutes its own knowledge area and that it will therefore need to be 'taught' in its own particular way(s)).

One key point in the debate seems to be the *primacy* of either live action or animation. It is a truism to state that animation, in common or lay terms is seen as a type of 'film', and one that is subordinate or secondary to 'proper' films, which is to say - live action. From the perspective of dominance in terms of box office, actual number of films produced, and other such markers, it is true that the common perception of 'animation' in relation to live action is as a secondary form. There are specific historical and contextual reasons for this perception (see Thompson 1980; Ward 2000). For instance, animated films tended to take longer to produce (and were therefore relatively more expensive). They also evolved mainly as a short form with a particular role to play on the dominant form of exhibition, the 'film bill'. They developed in such a way that certain kinds of recurring themes and motifs were considered the norm, fixing 'animation' as almost exclusively comedic.

All of the above points are true, but they only tell part of the story in the sense that they address 'animation' as if it consists only of one kind of animation - the cartoon. For the moment we can use the term 'cartoon' to

cover short films produced using cel animation techniques (and its precursors such as 'slash' or 'retracing' methods), and even those feature-length productions made using the same techniques. (As already noted, even computer-generated animation such as *Monsters Inc.* (2002), *Shrek*, and the *Toy Story* films fall into this category. Despite differences in technique, they are in the 'character animation' tradition of the cel-animated cartoon, and feature-length animations). The point is that, in the same way that 'film' as a term is often used to cover *any* kind of cinematic (and even, sometimes, TV and video) work, but has become mere shorthand for a very specific *kind* of film, the term 'animation' has suffered the same kind of reduction. Something that is a complex set of practices is reduced in common currency to being merely one of those practices. Thus, 'film' comes to mean 'live action, narrative, feature', and 'animation' comes to mean 'cel-animated cartoon'.

To return to this idea of animation or live action being seen as having primacy - this is one of the main stumbling blocks for further discussion. It is certainly the case that particular kinds of film achieved 'dominance' in the sense that they were most financially successful, and they were the main type of filmmaking that Hollywood, the globally dominant site of filmmaking, produced. As I have argued elsewhere though (2000), this 'dominance' emerged very much from a regime of exhibition that initially did *not* give primacy to one type of film over another (or certainly not to feature-length

fiction films), and there were complex contextual reasons for (a certain kind of) animation assuming a specific position. That this position was perceived (in many ways, quite correctly) to be a secondary or subordinate position has led to an understandable feeling that animation needs to be 'rescued' from neglect. This perhaps explains why, after a certain point, much of the writing on animation consists of historical discussions of particular animators, those considered to be most important to a canonical idea of how animation has functioned in relation to live action film. The assumption seemed to be that there are certain ways that animation can be talked about: first of all, from the technical/'how to' perspective; secondly, from a perspective that talked about animation and animators as in need of (re?)discovery. What these two perspectives have in common is they stress animation's peculiarities, its differences from live action. Paradoxically, they do so from a perspective that sees animation as a sub-set of 'film': what makes animation what it is, its essence, stems from certain technical differences from live action, so in a sense, animation is defined in relation to live action. Similarly, animators are rediscovered in a way that slots them into dominant paradigms of 'authorship' (e.g. Chuck Jones is a great director like, say, Howard Hawks; Suzanne Pitt's films belong to an avant-garde artistic tradition along with Maya Deren) much as they are applied to live action film.

The idea of animation as a type of film is very prevalent, though by no

means as 'commonsense' as it first sounds. Crafton suggests 'the animated film is a subspecies of film in general' (6). This is uncontroversial if only because of its imprecision. By this I mean, if Crafton had said something like 'animated films are films' or 'animated films are a form of cinema', the response would be 'Yes. And . . . ?' The statement really doesn't state that much, to be frank. This is because the diversity of one term is masked, while the limits of the other term are similarly hidden. 'The animated film' covers a lot of ground (of which, admittedly, Crafton is well aware), whereas the simple term 'film' is problematic because *its* diversity has been watered down to such a degree that it seems to stand only for particular *types* of film/cinematic experience. Cholodenko (1991a) attempts to develop Crafton's point about animated films being a 'subspecies of film in general': 'not only is animation a form of film but film is a form of animation' (22). The problem is that if something is a 'subspecies' of something else, that something else can hardly also be a 'form' of the subspecies. One formulation suggests a hierarchical relationship, while the other tries to resolve this, supposedly in animation's favour, by being similarly imprecise.

I would suggest that the best way to resolve this is to note that, if we are to have a category called 'film in general', then we need to take care to distinguish this from the very specific 'live action film'. Thus, there is 'film', and within that there are the subcategories (or subspecies) 'live action' and 'animation'. These latter two categories overlap and are mutually

determining, as Cholodenko implies. The confusion stems from Crafton asserting one thing - that animated films are a (sub) type of the general category 'film' - and Cholodenko asserting a very different thing as if he is *developing* Crafton's point - i.e. that live action film (which is also a sub-type of the general category 'film') can and should be seen as a form of animation.

How animation and live action *inter-relate* is one of the most contentious topics of this discussion. As the points above from Crafton and Cholodenko suggest, there is some eliding of the terms 'film' and 'live action film', a conceptual slippage even within discussions where maintaining such a distinction is vital. If animation is indeed a subcategory of film, then animation cannot also subsume film. Unless we have a *general* category 'film' (which we should give a different, more generalised title, such as 'moving image' or 'motion picture') which has two overlapping and dialectically-linked subcategories 'animated' and 'live action' film. *How* these two overlap and interrelate is the central issue. As I have already intimated, attempting to 'rescue' the animated film from 'neglect', or in some way arguing that animation is actually the precursor of 'proper' film, rather than some childish adjunct to it, is to miss the point. There were very specific reasons for animation becoming a 'secondary' form of filmmaking.

The relationship between animated and live action moving imagery has

been variously characterised using familial terms. Cholodenko uses the term 'step-child' ('animation as the 'step-child' of cinema') (9). Wells uses the term 'second cousin' ('its apparently less credible position as second cousin to mainstream cinema') (2). The fact is, these familial terms *defer* what is actually most interesting about the relationship between animated and live action forms of moving imagery.<sup>3</sup> The very closeness of the two kinds of filmmaking is diffused by using terms such as 'step-child' (as opposed to just 'child') and 'second cousin' (as opposed to just 'cousin'). This is all very well if we want to imply that the two types of filmmaking are somehow 'removed' from one another (second cousins, once removed?), but what is most interesting is the ways that the two forms *overlap* with each other. In this sense, they are more *conjoined twins* than they are any other kind of family metaphor. There are some things that are peculiar to one and not the other, but equally there are certain things that they share. For instance, certain elements of the production process (the frame by frame as opposed to continuous filming technique discussed above) distinguish one twin from the other. Also, certain possibilities in terms of representation (e.g. animation's oft-cited ability to represent dreams and such like in a way that surpasses live action) seem to mark out animation as different. Having said this though, there is simply too much that the two have in common for them to be considered as 'separate' - even seeing them as separate but part of the same 'family' is not good enough, in my view.

Maureen Furniss usefully suggests that we see 'animation' and 'live action' as parts of a continuum which she terms 'motion picture production'. It is entirely feasible for this continuum to take on board moving images that are non-filmic, such as video games - indeed the discussion of how computer animation figures as animation is central to much discussion of 21st century Film and Media Studies, such is the importance of CGI, and the overlaps between live action film, animation, special effects and games (see Ward, 2002). What Furniss suggests is a continuum with two poles which she terms 'mimesis' and 'abstraction'. Within such a continuum, it is possible to chart all forms of moving image production, and what is important is where they are in relation to one another. Thus:

Although the terms 'mimesis' and 'abstraction' are not ideal, they are useful in suggesting opposing tendencies under which live-action and animated imagery can be juxtaposed. The term 'mimesis' represents the desire to reproduce natural reality (more like live-action work) while the term 'abstraction' describes the use of pure form - a suggestion of a concept rather than an attempt to explicate it in real life terms (more like animation). There is no one film that represents the ideal example of 'mimesis' or 'abstraction' . . . [t]he point is that the relationship between animation and live action, represented by mimesis and abstraction, is a relative one. They are both tendencies within motion picture production, rather than completely separate practices (5-6).

This has the advantage of not seeking to separate out animation and live action, as if they are discrete. It also makes it much easier to discuss 'hybrid' forms, where the tendency towards animation or live action, abstraction or mimesis, is something that is very blurred. Whether we are talking here about films like *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988) or *Anchors*

*Aweigh* (1945), where live action characters 'co-star' and interact with cel-animated cartoon characters, or less straightforward hybrids, like *Waking Life* or the work of Patrick Bokanowski, having a continuum where we can position different texts helps us out of a conceptual impasse.

The notion of different 'tendencies' within communication (in this case, audiovisual communication or motion picture production) is of course another way of referring to 'multimodality', discussed in Chapter 3. Here, we can see that the way in which animation and live action can be said to be converging (in the use of CGI, special effects, and the ways in which animated films appear to mimic phenomenal reality) is not really a problem; it is merely a manifestation of multimodality. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) define this as

the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined – they may for instance reinforce each other ('say the same thing in different ways'), fulfil complementary roles . . . or be hierarchically ordered (20).

So, instead of a 'monomodal' essentialism, where expression is clearly demarcated into separate semiotic registers, there is recognition that the overlaps and interconnections are where we need to concentrate most attention and, furthermore, that the 'same thing' can be expressed in a number of different ways, often within one text (or 'semiotic product or event'). This is something I would now like to explore further, with particular



reference to the recent film *Waking Life*.

The reason for offering this case study of *Waking Life* is that the film and the techniques used have caused considerable controversy in animation circles. There has been some debate over whether or not Rotoshop (and 'ordinary' rotoscoping) is animation at all. Some people see its tracing of live action as 'cheating', not 'proper' animation, and so on. It is these disputes that make the rotoscope/Rotoshop such an interesting case; in effect, they constitute a 'limit case' for definitions of animation as a form. The paradoxical aesthetics of animation made using these techniques raise all sorts of questions to do with the ontology of the image and other issues that I have raised thus far in this chapter. These are questions that resonate throughout discussions of the relationship between animation and the real – something I move on to talk about at the end of this chapter. However, my discussion of *Waking Life* also taps into a range of other discourses about animation and how we understand it. For example, the role of computer technology in animation teaching and production is keenly debated, and the issues flagged up here in relation to *Waking Life* are revisited in Chapter 9. *Waking Life* should therefore not be seen as exemplary of all contemporary animation, but as a case study that encapsulates many of the points that are being debated by 'the animation community' regarding what constitutes animation in the first place, the relationship between animation and live action, and the place of computers and digital technology in the field.<sup>4</sup>

### **Case study: *Waking Life***

Richard Linklater's film is a meditation on dreaming and wakefulness and, as such, explores one of animation's oft-quoted strengths: the ability to shift rapidly and provocatively between 'levels' of representation. A loosely-structured film (many have noted its similarity to his debut film from 1991, *Slacker*), it follows one character (Wiley Wiggins, who appeared in his live action state in Linklater's *Dazed and Confused* (1993)) as he interacts with and meets a range of other people. The ostensible 'point' of us following this character is that he increasingly believes he is actually dreaming and wishes to wake up, and the encounters he has with others are part of his 'quest' to discover if he is actually awake, asleep, or what the meeting point of the two states actually is. Most of the encounters take the form of him meeting with a person who launches into a discourse on some philosophical issue. Sometimes we simply join the conversation part of the way through. Often there are abrupt shifts in tone from one person to the next. There are also some extremely odd rants by certain characters where Wiley seems not to be present. Even during the more 'straightforward' discussions, the animation of the image lends an eerie feel to what we are looking at.

The 'uncertainty' of the protagonist (am I awake? am I asleep? how can I determine which is which?) is figured in the 'uncertainty' of the imagery: is it live action? is it animation? Clearly, no-one would mistake this film for live

action as it is commonly understood. However, because the images are filmed in live action and then rotoscoped (using a computer program, nicknamed 'Rotoshop')<sup>5</sup> there is an 'instability' in where we might place it conceptually. The film's ontological status is difficult to discern. We can see that it is not live action, but it is also not animation in a clear, recognisable sense. In this respect, *Waking Life* falls into a category of animated films that take live action material and 'treat' or process it in some way that transforms it. Here, we have a filming technique using live action (Linklater shot the footage on digital video). The images are then processed by being downloaded into a computer, and the imagery is then 'animated' by being 'drawn over' via the rotoscoping program. In other words, the film is really a combination of live action and animation: live action is the 'source' for the film, and CG drawing is what transforms this footage. Indeed, this has led Frank Falcone to go so far as to say 'for the most part . . . it was an elaborate colourization of inexpensive DV footage. Impressive only in it's [sic] novelty' (email to author).

It is interesting to try and position this film on Furniss's continuum. It is clearly figurative in that it shows recognisably human characters for large stretches of the film, in a highly naturalistic style. (Indeed, some are not simply recognisable as 'people in general', but as Linklater himself, or certain other 'guest stars' like Stephen Soderbergh, or the 'main character' Wiley Wiggins). However, there is an overdetermined, excessive style to the

images that makes for uncomfortable viewing. For instance, certain characters' features will move rather *too* much while they are talking, giving the viewer a queasy 'under the influence' feeling. Objects in the background might take on a life of their own while people are talking. And, all the time this is going on, the viewer has a bizarre feeling that, despite the obvious fact that they are not looking at live action, but at drawings, these drawings do have an odd relationship with live action.

The film in one sense clearly belongs towards the mimesis end of Furniss's continuum, though with some 'abstraction' factored in, it would be pulled towards the middle of the line. Indeed, if we go with Furniss's example of Disney's *Snow White* being just past the centre of the continuum, nearer to abstraction than to mimesis, then we would have to say that *Waking Life* belongs right near the centre. It has a naturalistic (or mimetic) basis, but the rotoscoping technique abstracts the imagery. Again, it is worth noting the 'instability' of the image, as this problematises the placement of the film on the continuum. Some parts of the film are more mimetic than others, and it is the bizarre 'uncertainty' of where this imagery came from that makes it difficult for us to say where, exactly, it belongs. Its combination of live action, drawn animation and computer-generated images makes it a key example for discussing how animation and live action meet and inter-relate.

One of the rotoscope's initial uses outside of entertainment was for military training films, where the complexities of dealing with ordnance were made clearer via the tracing of live action footage (see Crafton 1993: 158). This points to one of the fundamental things about the rotoscope's refiguring of live action: it makes things *simpler*. Line, colour, texture – all are in some sense simplified when compared to the photographically 'real'. Yet, therein lies the haunting and problematic thing about rotoscoped animation – it has a very close relationship with live action, yet is 'not quite' live action. Or, more accurately, rotoscoped material is 'more than' live action; it is in a strange way revealing *more* of the real than the apparently real photographic imagery that acts as its basis. The movements are 'too real' to be proper 'cartoony' animation (with all its squash and stretch), yet they are at the same time 'unreal' in the way that they move, the convergence of live action and animation making for a strange *appropriation* of the real. So, what needs to be recognised is that rotoscoped animation is more often than not invoking its 'realism' in a highly self-conscious way.

This is something that Joanna Bouldin has argued in relation to Betty Boop (Bouldin 2001). She suggests that 'the real', though attenuated in animated films, is never entirely banished; and that the rotoscope technique offers some of the more compelling examples of 'realism' in animation. The fact is, Bouldin argues, that rotoscoped animation is predicated on the 'evidence' of the real person, captured in the live action footage. Far from

depicting an unreal figure, divorced from the real, the rotoscope manages to 'amplify' the real person 'underlying' the animated layer. In this respect, the rotoscope 'thickens' (to use Bouldin's term) the presence of the bodily, corporeal person. At the same time it renders them ghostly, spectral – so it is no coincidence that the rotoscope's eeriness is often talked about as 'surreal' or 'uncanny' (Langer 2003). Similarly, the connections between rotoscoped imagery and 'dreaminess', and the related concepts of morphing, daydreaming and the vicissitudes of memory are manifold (see Bukatman 2000).

I would argue that the rotoscoped imagery seen in this film in fact offers a strange spectacle that, by *foregrounding* the presence of both live action footage *and* animated/drawn imagery, affords the spectator a view of an alternative reality (or, perhaps, more correctly, an *alternative* view of our real, material world). The odd coexistence of live action and animated in the 'same' image is, I would suggest, a prime example of what Walter Benjamin called the 'optical unconscious' (see Buck-Morss 1989; Leslie 2002). As Susan Buck-Morss points out about Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, it is underpinned by a theory of 'modernity as a dream world, and a conception of collective "awakening" from it as synonymous with revolutionary class consciousness' (253). In other words, people are 'enchanted' by the specific conditions of capitalism, and modern life is very much analogous to a dream state. She continues:

Underneath the surface of increasing systemic rationalization, on an unconscious 'dream' level, the new urban-industrial world had become fully reenchanting . . . the 'threatening and alluring face' of myth was alive and everywhere . . . It appeared, prototypically, in the arcades, where 'the commodities are suspended and shoved together in such boundless confusion, that [they appear] like images out of the most incoherent dreams' (254).

It is not too much of a leap to see that animation has a peculiarly strong link to this way of conceptualising modern life. The 'boundless confusion' of many animated cartoons and the 'incoherence' of much animation suggest that they are a rich resource for those of us who are interested in exploring this area. Indeed, Esther Leslie talks of Benjamin's notion of an 'optical unconscious', which

switches a space consciously discerned by people for an unconsciously discerned space inspected by the camera eye. A 'new region of consciousness' is summoned by film, contracted only in conjunction with technology. The harmony between humanity and machinery . . . emerges . . . through the ways that the apparatus obliges viewers to see the world (2002: 105).

Leslie goes on to note that Benjamin discusses enlargements, slow motion and other filmic devices – they 'render . . . more precise what was already visible but unclear' (ibid.). My point here would be to stress that the rotoscope does precisely this too: it takes a pre-existing live action record of something and renders aspects of it 'more precisely'. It takes us beneath the phenomenal surface and reveals something of the real relations underpinning things. At the same time, however, the rotoscope has that peculiar characteristic, whereby it makes clearer, yet at the same time blurs,

obfuscates, (literally) covers over. This paradox places rotoscoped imagery in the realm of the 'undecidable' (see Cholodenko 1991b), where it is not 'neither/nor' but *both* at the same time. And yet, the uncanny feeling that the 'ghostly' aspect of rotoscoping engenders – the feeling that the real, live action person is *there*, underneath – makes a reading of the *social* dimension of rotoscoped imagery a distinct possibility.

From the point of view of technology and technique, therefore, it can be seen that *Waking Life* offers a good example of such an 'optical unconscious': the 'dreaminess' of the images, as experienced by us and the main character in the film, are figured by the rotoscoping. It is also vital to remember though that Wiley Wiggins spends the entire film trying to discern whether he is asleep or awake, and what might be the implications of not being able to discern this with any certainty. In this respect, *Waking Life* 'self-consciously' engages with the very philosophical questions that troubled Benjamin (and Marx before him) about the problems of dreaming, waking, the phantasmagoric, and the real. It is a film about dreaming and reality, and the unique spectacle that results shows that the animation techniques used are a perfect vehicle for such complex and contradictory subject matter.

### **Animation and 'the real'**

As noted above, one of the most potentially interesting areas for



discussion is how animation, in all its manifestations, relates to conceptions of the real and realism. As noted above, via Furniss's continuum, a typology of moving image production can be most usefully constructed around the *relative* realism attached to particular representations. The two opposing tendencies of mimesis and abstraction offer a multitude of positions in between where a specific text can be placed and thereby understood. There are two basic ways that one can approach this area. First of all, one can analyse and evaluate how animation 'is realistic' (or not, as the case may be). In other words, one can look at how animated films mobilise conventions of realism in order to better communicate their message. Under this discussion would fall consideration of Disney's 'hyper-realist' aesthetic, the more recent tendency in computer animation to eerily mimic the textures of a believably realistic world, and, even, the anthropomorphised approach of Aardman films like *A Close Shave* or *Chicken Run*. All of these types of animation operate within acceptably recognised canons of 'realism'. They are all, also, generally operating within a recognisably *fictional* sphere.

This leads us to the second possible approach. This is to look at how animation relates to representations of the real world itself, the real world of lived, material actuality (and, crucially, history). It is one thing to discuss the relative realisms of animated films that are clearly constructing a fictional space: no matter how 'realistic' the imagery might look, we still know we are looking at - and are being asked to consider - *a world*, not *the world* (see

Nichols, 1991: 109). This second approach therefore takes us into a consideration of how animation relates to the field of documentary and non-fiction filmmaking. And here lies a distinct problem. As noted above, animation's essential 'abstraction' tends to make the viewer aware that s/he is watching something other than a mimetic recording of an external reality. Any realism obtained in these films is to do with generic/narrative conventions and verisimilitude rather than any sense of the film actually resembling the world we live in.

The central problem, then, for those who wish to discuss realist representations of any kind, and documentary representations in particular, is that 'realism' is often misunderstood as or reduced to 'correspondence'. In other words, what is stressed is the indexical link between an external reality (the lived world of actuality) and the thing that purports to represent it. In the case of live action, the mimetic power of the image is often considerable. Even in those instances where there is a level of formal experimentation at other levels, the apparent correspondence between the cinematographic and the 'real' means the image is recognised and understood as 'real' by the viewer. This isn't to say that the viewer takes the image as reality itself, but that the image is read in terms of its extraordinary mimetic qualities.<sup>6</sup>

Furniss has developed the mimesis/abstraction continuum for motion

pictures and we can place all moving imagery on it, positioned depending on their relative realisms. In other words, the continuum is one that is predicated on realism. In many ways, it would be helpful to develop a similar continuum for the broad area of overlapping practices commonly known as 'documentary'. Even though Furniss's continuum by definition can accommodate *all* moving image production, it is perhaps worth considering the specificity of documentary signifying practices by attempting to construct a similar continuum. Certainly, there are a number of issues relating to documentary - and its relationship to the real especially - that seem to require specific attention. More particularly, we need a model that will allow us to talk about animated documentaries, films that obviously do not 'directly' represent 'the real world' (or have the same correspondence to it that live-action documentaries can), but nevertheless do make some truth claims about the real world or historical events.<sup>7</sup> Even at its most mimetic (e.g. *Final Fantasy*) animation just does not correspond to the real in the same way as live-action. As suggested above, this does not mean that it cannot represent the real, or offer illuminating comment on it.

However, there is a school of thought that argues that animation, by virtue of its essential 'abstraction' (no matter how mimetic an animation might be, it will always be nearer to the centre of Furniss's continuum than the 'mimesis' pole) cannot (and should not) attempt to mimic reality. This is a particularly resonant point when considering what Paul Wells terms the

'documentary tendency' of some animation (1998: 28). Those who view animation's essence as residing in its more experimental approaches see no point in such a form setting out to represent reality. Indeed, William Moritz expresses an extreme version of this train of thought, when he says

No animation film that is *not* non-objective and/or non-linear can really qualify as true animation, since the conventional linear representational story film has long since been far better done in live-action (1988: 21).

There are considerable problems with this assertion. Apart from anything else, it seems to suggest that any animation that is '*not* non-objective and/or non-linear' must therefore, by definition, be attempting to be a 'conventional linear representational story film'. But these two extremes are hardly the only options open to filmmakers in either live action or animation. In addition to this, it has to be said that Moritz's terms are somewhat vague and (unsurprisingly enough for someone trying to argue that 'non-objectivity' and non-linearity' are the essence of animation) fall into an essentialist trap of implying something like 'this form can do x, therefore x is its "destiny", and all it should ever do'. Finally, and most serious of all, this is a statement that completely ignores the complex contextual, historical and ideological reasons *why* a specific form (whether 'live action film', 'animation', or 'documentary', or even 'parliamentary democracy') comes to be what it is, and have the function that it does. The logic of the statement seems to rest on a flawed foundation: live action tells stories and represents 'objective reality' 'better than' animation; therefore animation should not bother with

either storytelling or the real social world. This seems far too proscriptive, and not a little politically vacuous.<sup>8</sup>

The main problem with an approach such as Moritz's is that he eschews the useful relative/continuum model, where all motion picture production is considered, in favour of a model that attempts to hold up one form of representation, like animation or live action, as essentially better than the other. Not only better, but also as an entirely separate mode. (In this respect, he falls foul of the 'monomodality' noted above). In many ways though, his approach can ultimately be disregarded, as he is seeking a chimera - 'true animation' - which exists only notionally and therefore outside of the bounds of our discussion here.

Ultimately, the problems and debates pertaining to defining animation need to be read in the context of how the *digitalisation* of culture has impacted on previously-held categories and definitions. As noted in Chapter 3, this is something that anyone needs to do, if they are trying to understand the knowledge area related to Film and Media Studies. Andrew Darley (2000) has examined the ways in which digital imagery has inflected notions of the real, via the concepts of 'surface play' and 'spectacle'. David Rodowick (2001) has examined the ways in which 'new media', and digital culture in particular, have challenged and invigorated some of the fundamental philosophical questions asked in relation to what he calls

Visual Studies. These works, and Sobchack's interesting anthology on morphing as a cultural phenomenon (2000), offer a foundation for a new(er) understanding of animation: one that recognises that 'animation' as a category may well encompass far more than is commonly supposed. This chapter has contributed to this broad set of debates by arguing that definitions of animation are complex, not straightforward, but also suggesting that animation's representing and reimagining of the real is one of the areas that can most usefully be explored further. The ontological, philosophical and aesthetic questions raised by a technique such as rotoscoping need to be addressed in relation to animation as a putative discipline and the broader contexts of (moving) visual culture as a whole. These 'disciplinary' questions have already been introduced in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, but now we must revisit them, in order to clarify how animation functions and what claims it might have to 'disciplinary' status.

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<sup>1</sup> Although we need to take care not to fall into 'essentialist' conceptions of Animation – as my later discussion demonstrates – it is clear that one of the main things that people debate when trying to define Animation is whether or not it has an identifiable 'basis' that distinguishes it from other forms of moving image production.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that, despite the concentration on 'single frame' and 'frame by frame' as defining features of animation, a lot of animation does not shoot one frame at a time quite simply because the eye will not register the movements (or not smoothly, at least). It is possible to 'cheat' so-called 'single frame' shooting by exposing up to four frames of any one cel (or movement). So, even this apparent 'bedrock' of the definition is open to debate.

<sup>3</sup> There is a concentration here on 'cinema' as the meeting point for animation and live action, in both Cholodenko's and Wells' discussions. Certainly, the cinema is perhaps the key site for such an interface, but we need to remember the increasing importance of computer games in this context (especially as they are now a staggeringly large market, in some respects competing directly with cinema at their respective 'box offices').

<sup>4</sup> These issues are explored in more detail in my essay "Rotoshop" in context: Computer rotoscoping and animation aesthetics', *Animation Journal*, 12, 2004.

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<sup>5</sup> The rotoscope was patented by Max Fleischer in 1917. The so-called 'Rotoshop' software was developed by Bob Sabiston, and used in *Waking Life* as well as some earlier short films, such as *Snack and Drink* (1999). The Rotoshop works on the basis of 'interpolation', a technique that allows the animator to rotoscope the main features or movements from the live action footage, and the computer interpolates the 'in between's'. Basically, the technique means that animators do not have to rotoscope every frame, as lines are 'carried over' from one frame to the next. This makes Sabiston's programme extremely user-friendly.

<sup>6</sup> Even a film like, say, *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), for all its experimentation and surrealism, rests on the recognisably mimetic qualities of live action shooting: e.g. there is an actual eye being slit open. So, although Bazin would hardly hold up this film as an example of his idea of realist cinema - a unified, mimetic representation of the actual world, or a fictional approximation thereof - it remains the case that even as outlandish and surreal a film as this uses the ability of live action to in some sense 'capture' the reality of actions, in order to put across its message, however 'unreal' - or 'surreal' that message may be.

<sup>7</sup> Recent work that examines the animated documentary includes Gunnar Strom's essay (2003) and my forthcoming essay in Heckman and Wolf-Meyer (eds.) *The Cartoon Reader*.

<sup>8</sup> The same logic tends to apply when some people discuss, say, the provision of social services: we get an uninterrogated 'this side good, that side bad' polarity that invariably cannot see beyond those terms and suggest possible alternatives. It is unsurprising that, in a world where global capitalism is dominant - for very specific ideological reasons rather than any 'natural' or 'essential' ones - 'arguments' are often waged in such a way that cannot see 'beyond' global capitalism, and therefore end up concluding that its way of doing things is 'far better' than any (not really articulated) 'alternative'. To bring it back to Moritz and animation: it is certainly the case that live action film has developed into a hegemonic position of dominance, and that by far and away the most dominant form of live action film is narrative, or the so-called 'linear representational story film'. But to conclude from this state of affairs that live action *therefore* tells stories 'better than' animation is patently false. Would Moritz seriously argue that films such as *Toy Story*, *Toy Story 2*, *Shrek*, or *Monsters Inc.* are anything but 'conventional linear representational story film[s]' of the highest order and coherence? (And, indeed, that any of these films, *because* they are animated and not live action, are less clear as narrative than *Mulholland Drive* or *Last Year in Marienbad*?) He might respond that live action *as a general rule tends* to tell stories 'better than' animation, but that isn't what he actually says. Nor does this address the more fundamental points that 'better than' is simply too vague and subjective a criterion on which to base an argument like this, and that his argument implies that because a certain form does something, apparently very well, it should just be allowed to get on with it, seemingly uninterrogated and unchallenged by alternatives.

## Chapter 5

### **Animation as a 'discipline' and its relationship to other disciplines**

In this chapter I shall be exploring the ways in which animation can be said to constitute a 'discipline' in its own right. In Part One of the thesis I discussed the fact that 'disciplinary' status for a field of knowledge is by no means as straightforward as it might first appear. It is the result of complex historical and material forces, institutional pressures and, clearly, epistemological debates about the nature and function of specific knowledges. In Chapter 3, these issues were related to the 'disciplinary' field of Film & Media Studies. The general argument was that this 'discipline' was actually a fertile meeting point of a number of other disciplines - some more established than others. In many respects, the position of Film & Media Studies as such a 'meeting point', at the boundaries of many other disciplinary fields, is what gives it both its methodological complexity and its perceived lack of specificity. This chapter will attempt to determine whether a notional disciplinary field - Animation Studies - can be identified and what might be the implications of such 'identification'. It will therefore engage with the following broad areas: animation's status as a recognisable/discrete 'knowledge' area; to what extent animation's discreteness from (or overlaps with) apparently adjacent knowledge areas such as Film, Media, Art & Design and so on helps to shape it; and animation's position as a 'discursive field', or meta-discourse,



which may aid the rethinking of ostensibly 'broader' questions (e.g. the nature of knowledge and disciplines as a whole, or different approaches to pedagogy).

### **Animation's status as a knowledge area: is there such a thing as Animation Studies?**

It might seem an odd question: if people study animation, then 'animation studies' must exist. This is of course true, but tends to gloss over the fact that there is a difference between, on the one hand, simply studying various types of animation and, on the other, proposing that there is a coherent and recognisable field that can be termed 'Animation Studies'. Indeed, this goes right to the heart of this particular research project: what is animation, who studies and teaches it, how, and in what context/s? Furthermore, can these people and contexts be talked about as if they constitute a 'disciplinary' field? The distinction is one that also dogs 'Media Studies' for example. The fact that 'media studies' (note the case distinction) or, simply, 'studying the media' can take place in a number of contexts that would not be described as 'Media Studies' (e.g. English or other subjects might use film and television to elaborate on certain aspects) points to the fact that such a label might be problematic. One thing that is often overlooked is that these areas are plural - the very term 'Studies' implies that they are multiple, composite. There is a tension between this plurality and the notion of there being a central 'core' to 'the subject' that can be easily identified. Being able to point to and document a discipline's

'essence', its main objectives, has become one of the main issues in certain sectors - an apparent obsession with being able to document and 'prove' a discipline's 'worth' by cataloguing what it does and how it does it. I shall return to this issue in my discussion of recent initiatives in subject 'benchmarking' (see Chapter 8), and particularly how such prescription helps or hinders the understanding (and actual teaching) of a subject area.

For the moment we need only reiterate that the kind of classification of knowledge that is currently dominant - that is, one that classifies along broadly *disciplinary* lines, (even if there is a sense of a subject being 'hybrid', this is talked about as the *meeting of disciplines* (inter-, cross-, trans-, etc.)) - is historically a relatively recent phenomenon. The shift to understanding and categorising knowledge in this manner has led to something of a polarisation in terms of so-called 'traditional' and 'progressive' attitudes to education as a whole. And often, the site of most debate is 'new' subject areas such as Media and Film (and, even more recently, the apparently discrete 'New Media', with its emphasis on ICT rather than 'old' forms of mass communication). These areas are viewed either with suspicion/outright hostility (by the traditional wing, who see them as an amorphous and unrigorous 'easy option' compared to 'proper' subjects), or as a potentially liberating and progressive field that can, precisely because of its 'hybridity', offer a route into educating a range of people on a range of issues. (Also, the fact that subjects such as Film and

Media tend to engage with some sense of 'the popular' is another reason for them to be either dismissed or valorised). Again, I shall return to this issue below, when discussing animation's position as a 'discursive field' and how this impacts on its epistemological status.

The fact that there is a Society for Animation Studies suggests that 'Animation' exists as an identifiable object of study, epistemologically separable from other forms of 'artistic' or 'mass media' endeavour. However, as Jayne Pilling makes apparent in the introduction to her edited anthology *A Reader in Animation Studies*:

. . . 'animation studies' is still hardly established as an academic discipline. Consequently, a 'reader' might be considered a rather pre-emptive gesture in this instance and the conventional introduction to an academic reader (which usually seeks to place its contents in context through the critical and theoretical traditions in previous writings on the subject, and establishes a position or dialectic in relation to the latter), might seem inappropriate (Pilling, 1997, ix).

She then goes on to attempt a tentative 'contextualisation' by noting animation's 'marginalisation' - both in general cultural and more specifically academic terms. In other words, the apparent rise of Animation Studies, and its 'recognition' in the founding of a Society of Animation Studies, is predicated on a perceived marginal status for 'animation' in relation to more 'dominant' modes of representation, particularly film and broadcast media. The main paradigms adopted for the study of animation tend to 'mirror' those used in 'film, media and cultural studies' (ibid: xiv).

Such 'marginality' is characteristic of a 'new' subject. In effect, certain scholars, practitioners and learners, in various inter-related contexts will attempt to fill a perceived gap. Their apparent common goals and similar subject matter mean that they will constitute themselves as a more or less coherent body, addressing something that formerly received little or no attention, or perhaps, what attention it *did* receive was seen to be skewed in favour of the 'dominant' features of the existing disciplinary structure. (An example here is the gradual founding of Television Studies as a more or less distinct 'subject' from Film Studies and Media Studies). The founding of Animation Studies, with the attendant conferences, journals, scholarly positions etc., gave voice to an area of research that had previously had to fight for room within more established areas.

The only problem with this is that such 'marginality' can perhaps hamper the development of a 'new' discipline, to the extent that very real and potentially useful connections are resented or, even less usefully, treated as if they do not exist. By this I mean that the new-found 'freedoms' of a practitioner in an area like Animation Studies (who previously might have 'done' animation studies, lower case, in the context of Film, Media etc.) can overshadow the fact that the apparent constraining of a particular subject matter by 'something bigger' is hardly ever (if at all) a simple case of a one-way exercise of power.

The central difficulty is therefore the relationship that animation is perceived to have with cognate areas of knowledge, and how practitioners in any of these fields (and, indeed, 'outsiders') respond to this relationship. In many respects, this is the thesis, in a nutshell. I shall return below to the specific concepts of overlap and discreteness, and also to the notions of discursivity and recursivity, and how they help us to theorise these issues. For the moment, however, I'd like to concentrate on how the study of animation per se might be perceived.

Mark Langer has pointed to what he sees as the key problem:

It is my impression that the study of animation right now has not progressed much beyond the point that film studies in general had reached by the early 70s . . . What really seems to be holding animation scholarship back, in my view, is its insularity. Few animation scholars really participate in the scholarly world outside of animation, and appear uninterested in or unaware of the theoretical or methodological debates that are going on [in] other disciplines (Langer, 2000a).

These statements are interesting for a number of reasons. There seems to be an implicit recognition that animation, for better or worse, has what we might term a 'special relationship' with Film Studies. Langer suggests as much when he states that animation has not 'progressed much beyond' a particular point that 'film studies in general' had reached by a specific historical point. It is certainly the case that much of the so-called 'scholarly' work in what has now become known as 'Animation Studies' perhaps began

life under the aegis of Film Studies. And, as has been argued elsewhere in this thesis (and by others), the way that 'new' disciplinary structures become recognised *as such* is by the new knowledge generated in some sense 'moving beyond' (or 'progressing') some existing relationship. It constitutes itself as - and is recognised as - different precisely in the sense that it does something that the existing knowledge area cannot accommodate. The issue for Langer, then, is not so much that we should ignore the links between Film Studies and Animation Studies, but that these links should be seen in their precise historical context. In short, Film Studies has 'moved on'; so, now, should Animation Studies.

Animation scholars are seen as being hidebound by somewhat outmoded approaches that they have borrowed/adapted from 1970s Film Studies methodologies. Thus, animation scholarship is being held back by its 'insularity' and this is an insularity that is a hangover from these one-dimensional approaches. (Examples of which are: an overly simplistic 'auteurism', which tends towards an equally 'basic' survey/overview methodology; related to this to some degree is the tendency to make arbitrary distinctions between 'high' and 'low' art in animation, in much the same way that popular cinema and the avant-garde were seen 'separately' in the 1970s). The term 'insularity' is an interesting one though: it *can* imply a strength, particularly in terms of boundaries, that retains the internal logic of a particular discipline/subject, helping it to keep its focus, and so forth.

However, the more usual (and pejorative) meaning of the term is that something is obsessively concerned with some sense of 'purity' and falls back on 'insularity' as a way of maintaining this. (A common example is the 'insularity' of certain British people when it comes to mainland Europe). This is the meaning of the term as Langer is using it in relation to animation scholarship as he sees it. The idea that 'animation' is seen as a separate field, with its own concerns and logical, methodological procedures is an understandable one for animation scholars to hold, but it is paradoxically the root of some difficulties, precisely because of animation's position as a 'conjunctural' discipline. It is animation's relationships with other knowledge areas - like Film, Media, Art & Design - that actually makes it what it is, and Langer is calling for a clear recognition of this. He is also asking that things be taken further, to recognise the potential of applying, for example, 'cognitive science . . . or . . . cyborg theory . . . just two of the hundreds of theoretical streams that could be provoking some new approaches' (Langer, *ibid.*) to the study of animation.

In all this, however, we need to keep a close eye on what happens to the *specificity* of the subject. It is all very well stating that we need to broaden the methodological approaches (and also, remember, there is also a broadening in terms of *what* animation actually might be, how we define it, and so forth - in other words, the actual *object* of study), but doesn't this potentially 'dilute' the focus? Drummond's discussion of Media Studies as a

subject or discipline is of use here (see also Chapter 3), and can help us reflect on animation's epistemological/academic position. He distinguishes between two terms, 'specificity' and 'fundamentality'. In asking what it is that gives Media Studies its 'specificity', he says:

is Media Studies 'specific' in its attention to particular empirical objects like films and television programmes? Or does its specificity consist of its elaboration of a particular programme of intellectual initiatives where media objects are reference points which support general academic aims and objectives at another level? (Drummond, 1995: 9).

In relating this to animation, we could ask the same questions. If one is studying 'animation' (or 'particular empirical objects like . . . ') then one is surely undertaking 'Animation Studies'. However, it is worth stressing at this point that virtually all animation also falls under the rubric 'films and television programmes'. So, the simple assumption that, just by looking at 'animation', one is thereby 'doing Animation Studies' is problematised. This much is made clear by the many (academic) 'homes' in which we find animation, and its 'studies'. The second 'strand' of specificity that Drummond points to is more 'general', but only in the sense that it does not tie itself to a set of empirical objects, but rather rests on a set of academic aims and objectives. Here, animation would operate as the aforementioned 'reference points'. The niggling difficulty is that, if one can identify a set of aims and objectives and note that a certain set of texts can act as reference points for these aims and objectives, then those texts/empirical objects do hold some of the 'specificity'. In other words, the 'specificity' will be 'read back on to' the empirical objects, roughly translating as '*this* is what we



study'. (Clearly, the exact nature of the 'this' - and, indeed, the 'we' - remains as difficult to pin down as ever. My point though is simply that the two specificities to which Drummond gestures are not quite as separate as his essay makes out).

This is why Drummond puts forward another term as part of understanding these complex epistemological issues, that of 'fundamentality'. This term moves one away from the potential 'cloudiness' (my term) of 'specificity', and

involves the identification of levels and dimensions of profundity, primacy and capacity to generate substantial intellectual complexity. In empirical terms, it gives rise to assumptions about 'foundation' disciplines and 'second order' disciplines, and leads us in the current context to ask whether Media Studies can be placed with justice in either of these categories. A large number of parameters are involved in such a general archaeology of knowledge where Media Studies is concerned, turning on distinctions between 'disciplines' and 'subjects' (Drummond, 1995, 9).

Arguably, the problems to which Drummond points regarding Media Studies are redoubled when considering Animation Studies, quite simply because the latter can be (and has been) considered a component of the former. And, if we see 'Media Studies' as a somewhat larger project than is commonly thought (where 'Media Studies' is conflated with and reduced to simply 'studying media artefacts'), it could be argued that many other areas of knowledge might be subsumed within 'Media Studies'. In other words, a project of clarification would involve seeing 'media language as a special sub-set of general speech-acts and repertoires of mediation' (ibid.). 'Media

Studies', in this respect, would become a much more important epistemological structure, acting as a 'framing device' for many other intellectual activities. This is something that has been addressed by Alvarado and Ferguson (1983) in their essay on Media Studies and discursivity, something I return to below.

To return to Drummond's points, he makes a key distinction between 'disciplines' and 'subjects', but also points to neither one nor the other having a monopoly on epistemological potency or clarity. Their effectiveness as educational 'frames' resides in their overall objectives - about what are they seeking knowledge? for what purpose? - and their connection to their social context. Thus:

Foundation disciplines, for example, if their organisation is based on a merely additive, 'collection' model of curricular activity and behaviour, may lose intellectual and heuristic potency. Second order disciplines, on the other hand, may achieve considerable academic and educational sophistication through the integration they achieve within a frankly derivative intellectual framework. We might more truly call them subjects. This refers us back to our earlier discussion of 'objects' and of 'methods'. A discipline dominated by its reference to real-world 'objects', for example, is likely to be held within an essentially reactive and descriptive paradigm, whilst a discipline preoccupied with 'method' may founder on the formalism of a solipsistic immanence (Drummond, 9-10).

In the case of a knowledge area such as 'Animation', we can clearly see that it falls into the 'second order discipline' category, in that much of the work carried out there is academically and educationally sophisticated but, equally, it is carried out within a derivative framework. There is nothing

inherently wrong with this, as we can see. It simply means that many of the methodological and epistemological procedures of 'Animation' as a knowledge area are derived from 'somewhere else'. This is not a problem, unless you wish to call 'Animation' a 'discipline', because as Drummond points out, this 'derivation' means that a more accurate label is 'subject'. The chief methodological problem in relation to Animation (and this is something to which Langer alludes) is that it can sometimes find itself 'held within an essentially reactive and descriptive paradigm', in the sense that it merely seeks to offer overview (albeit critically/analytically informed overview) of those 'real world objects' that can be categorised as 'animated texts'. The key is to steer a course between the two extremes as outlined by Drummond, seeking to place them in a dynamic relationship with each other, rather than seeing one as inherently 'better' than the other. Whilst an overly descriptive paradigm is a weakness, so too is one that appears abstract and 'theoreticist', but it might well be the case that some practitioners would rather fall foul of the latter, than be accused of 'deriving' their intellectual framework from anywhere but 'within' their own 'discipline'.

What we need is a conceptual 'map' that allows us to think through where 'animation' lies in relation to cognate subject areas. We also need to pay careful attention to terminology, as some writers refer to 'disciplines', 'subjects', 'knowledges' or 'knowledge areas' without making entirely clear what differences, if any, there are between them. (This problem was

addressed in Chapter 2). I would suggest that the notion of 'boundary' subjects or disciplines, and the particular issues and problems relating to them, are of most use in understanding animation as an epistemological phenomenon. The fact is, as already stated, animation shares many of its objects of study, and a considerable number of its methodological approaches and theoretical paradigms, with other disciplines. Most animations are films or television programmes. An increasing number are computer games (and computer-generated imagery plays a massively important role in current cinema/TV practice). Those that do not fall into one or more of these categories will no doubt comfortably fall into the broad category 'art' or 'art and design'. Such a train of thought is further complicated by the fact that some would locate film and media practice in general as a kind of 'art' or 'artistic practice'.

### **Case study: the Royal College of Art**

In the case of the Royal College of Art (RCA) animation course, we have a prime example of the kind of course that both attempts to foster independent creativity, while also clearly locating animation as a (very important) strand of a broader 'visual studies' framework. It is also apparent from the course documentation that the course is looking for its graduates to achieve a level of theoretical/critical skill, but that the 'bottom line' is for animation to be 'recognised' as a creative/practical endeavour. Thus:

The Royal College of Art aims to achieve international standards of

excellence in the postgraduate and pre-/mid-professional education of artists and designers and related practitioners. It aims to achieve these through the quality of its teaching, research and practice and through its relationship with the institutions, industries and technologies associated with the disciplines of art and design (Appendix: A6 Royal College of Art).

Much the same imperatives are on display in Maureen Furniss's conference address on the teaching of animation and the rationale underlying the Newport course (both discussed in Chapter 6). The basic idea is that people studying animation are studying *how to animate*. And yet, the critical and theoretical language used to locate this practice draws on much more than 'just' discourses related to Animation Studies. Indeed, the scope of references is potentially very broad indeed. This is shown in what the RCA calls Critical and Historical Studies (CHS). Along with Drawing Studio work, Storyboard Workshops, and other practice-based work, the discourse holding all this together is described as an opportunity

for postgraduate art and design students to reflect upon their own practice, and to engage with students from their own and other disciplines. The role of Critical and Historical Studies (CHS) is to support the studio courses in enabling these critical engagements to take place (ibid).

In other words, it is clearly recognised that the practice of animating needs to be placed in its historical and theoretical contexts; the integration of theory with practice is therefore central (this is discussed at greater length in Chapter 6). Also foregrounded is the notion of Animation drawing together a broad spectrum of other disciplinary discourses. The CHS strand develops along the lines of becoming increasingly 'interdisciplinary', and

stressing the 'interdisciplinarity' of Animation. Thus:

In the first term the students are offered a range of courses that are each closely related to one of the groups of disciplines represented by the Schools, including Applied Art, Architecture, Design, Communications, Fashion & Textiles and Fine Art. Through lectures, screenings, visits and seminars they explore key debates and issues within contemporary culture. While most students will take a course that is related to their particular discipline, there is also the opportunity for them to explore issues outside of their discipline by electing for one of the other courses.

In the second term students elect from a set of more broadly-based courses each of which deal with subjects that are intentionally cross-disciplinary and so will appeal to students from any area of study (ibid).

In the term following these two, the culmination of all this study is the dissertation, which is clearly viewed as the main 'outcome' of the CHS programme. What is valued though is the linking of the theoretical to the practical:

The Critical and Historical Programme is intended to enhance the creative relationship between theory and practice. It is designed to make a significant contribution to the student experience at the Royal College of Art by engaging with theoretical ideas in an exciting and challenging manner, and by establishing their relevance to each student's own practice (ibid).

In course documents such as these we can clearly see what Drummond refers to as a 'derivative framework', in that the disciplinary discourse of *this* Animation Studies is avowedly *interdisciplinary*. Yet there are difficulties with 'interdisciplinarity' if it is not interrogated.

The fundamental problem seems to be: how can we locate or pin down

something (and thereby understand what it does, who does it and so on) when it appears to exist in a large number of different places, all at the same time? (see analysis of questionnaires in Chapter 8). This again takes us back to 'specificity' in the sense that one possible answer to this conundrum is to endlessly 'hybridise', usually with the result that we have a large number of 'hyphenated' names, something akin to Polonius's description of the actors' prowess.<sup>1</sup> This is the logic of a simplistic 'inter-disciplinarity', where separate subjects are bolted together. The problem remains though: what happens if one subject is seen to be 'part of' these others, a sub-category or marginal activity 'within' them, rather than an active 'partner' in the 'inter-disciplinary' dance? The problem of insularity and how it shapes animation's position in the academy is something I return to further on, when I address the notions of discursive and recursive relationships. Now I'd like to turn to the relationship between animation and Film Studies in particular, as this is one of the central concerns of the thesis, and seems to me to be the most immediately recognisable problem area. In addressing this specific relationship, I shall of course be referring to some of the things I have said in Chapter 4, which concentrated on how we might define animation in relation to 'film' as a category. It will also become clear that this section shall engage with ideas of overlap and discreteness in terms of knowledge areas. To briefly restate the central hypothesis at this stage: it is my contention that 'Animation' as a field is the discursive 'thread' that links a seemingly disparate set of (inter-) disciplines, and it is the

relationship that Animation has with Film and Media Studies – the commonalities, convergences and contradictions – that offers the most useful pathway for understanding contemporary audiovisual culture and how it is studied.

### **Animation and adjacent fields of knowledge: discreteness, overlap and permeability**

In this section I shall discuss the specific arguments of Watson (1997) and Cholodenko (1991), and how they argue animation's close relationship with Film Studies. What they say can be placed in a broad context of overlap and permeability of boundaries as discussed by Klein (1993), for example. Fundamental to their arguments is also the belief that animation as a practice and as an epistemological 'object' tends to problematise a broader, pre-existing (and, in some respects, dominant) field - i.e. 'Film Studies'. They come from a perspective that constructs animation as 'marginal', but they do so in a way that recognises that this is not, in and of itself, a negative thing. Animation can be theorised in such a way that its position as a 'type of film' is weighed up against both its other disciplinary affiliations (e.g. with Art and Design, Graphics, Computing, Engineering, Robotics etc.), and also its particular usefulness in demanding a rethinking of what a 'type of film' actually is in the first place. In other words, animation tends to crystallise the 'interdisciplinarity' of a field such as Film Studies and careful consideration of both 'Animation' and 'Film Studies' should



result in a clearer understanding of both.

The problem for Watson is that, despite the attention lavished on animation in certain critical-theoretical circles, he thinks that such work falls into the trap of seeing 'animation' and 'live-action' as separate entities. As he says:

[c]oncentrating . . . [on] animation as a cinematic form with its own regime of specificity has had the effect of reproducing the sense that it exists as a formal and aesthetic world apart from live-action film, that it is first and foremost a sub-category of cinema (Watson, 1997, 46).

His argument is one that sees animation and live-action as inextricably linked. This is in opposition to

the common sense position, reinforced by historical and even the most contemporary discourses . . . that animation and live action shall be regarded as separate entities, each with its own aesthetic register and corresponding modes of knowledge (ibid.).

This takes us back to the issues raised in Chapter 4, on defining animation. Clearly, Watson believes that we should see animation and live-action as 'two points on the same ontological continuum' (47). This much was stated earlier. However, we are also in the same problematic area we were earlier, where any attempt to discuss animation's 'specificity' is endlessly confused by its 'overlap' or 'implication' with the categories 'live-action' and 'cinema'. The key difficulty is of course that, if there is to be a knowledge area known as 'Animation Studies', then it must have some distinguishing features,

some essential characteristics that mark it out as different.

Again, though, we are in a dilemma. Animation's close relationship with film has tended to mean that theoretical and historical assumptions are either simply taken on board as if they are unproblematically applicable to animation, or they are rejected out of hand, as 'not suited' to animation precisely because they referred in the first instance to 'film'. More often than not, though, I would argue that any distinction between 'animation' and 'film' as knowledge areas has less to do with actual perceived differences between the two types of representation, and a good deal to do with *strategic* moves by practitioners in the given area. In the same way that Film Studies had to make some elbow room for itself 'within' (at first, anyway) other knowledge areas (like English), and then gradually move towards some sense of autonomy in the academy, a similar process is taking place with animation. However, the point is that a *strategic* move of this kind should not be confused with an actual ontological difference. It is more the case that those teaching animation are engaging in a rhetorical manoeuvre to 'argue the case' for their activity. The most persuasive accounts of defining animation are those that do not posit an *essential* difference between 'animation' and 'live action', in that both are instances of 'moving image culture' (see Chapter 4). The differences reside more in the relative 'weight' given to (say) 'film' as opposed to 'animation', the specifics of the contexts in which they both operate, and so on. It is unsurprising that

an activity/set of texts that occupy a marginal position within 'film' in general should also be perceived as existing 'on the margins' of Film Studies as a knowledge area.

A question I asked of the Animation Journal email discussion group elicited an interesting response on this matter. Asking for thoughts on animation and Film Studies' 'separateness' (Ward, 2000), Keith Bradbury stated that animation has 'its own history that should be addressed distinct from film' (Bradbury, 2000a). This short statement prompted a much longer one from Mark Langer, the gist of which was:

[w]hatever distinctiveness animation may have (and that is open to dispute) can only be understood by understanding its relationship to other media forms. It seems to me that almost all of animation history HAS been discussed as if animation were distinct from film (or almost anything else) . . . [but] . . . to continue in our well-established manner would be contrary to almost all scholarship going on in art history, film studies, communication, etc., which emphasises the entire horizon of experience in the evaluation of any medium (Langer, 2000b).

Now, this seems fair enough: it is important that any animation (and any study of animation) is seen in, and placed in, a broader context. This will involve thinking through the links to films, print media, broadcast media, spectacle, fantasy, and so on. Equally, it will involve a thinking through of the links between apparently very similar knowledge areas. Nevertheless, while not disagreeing with Langer's basic contention, it does tend to mean that the issue of 'distinctiveness' is somewhat lost or deflected. This is something that Bradbury picks up on in his counter-response to Langer ('a

more considered response to your criticism of my stance re animation studies', as he puts it). Bradbury states:

Any discipline has had to establish its distinctiveness from others. Art History is a young discipline in relation to History, yet we make the distinction between art history and history and others like communication studies (language in the mass media context) as distinct from english [sic] or canadian [sic] or french [sic] studies. There is a point where the host discipline becomes the embryonic cast-off of new life (Bradbury, 2000b).

For Bradbury, what is important is to stress animation's 'distinctiveness' as an object of study. But the vital thing to note is that this is not necessarily the same thing as saying that animation is completely 'distinct' from other forms of communication (such as films, or 'art' in general). Rather, this 'distinctiveness' is more of a rhetorical manoeuvre, a staking of animation's right to be studied in and of itself, rather than as an adjunct to 'something else'. This disagreement is therefore a matter of degree rather than a substantive difference: they are arguing much the same point, but from different points on a spectrum. Bradbury does not mean that animation can be talked of as if it was produced and consumed *outside of* the broader contexts, but he is concerned to ensure that animation's 'distinctiveness' (such as it is) is not lost. In many ways, we are back to the issue of 'primacy' here: two scholars who actually do not disagree at the fundamental level, but where they do seem to disagree is in the position afforded animation in their epistemology. As Bradbury states: '[m]y concern was to say unequivocally that animation should be studied for its own

history not as a marginal note to film' (ibid.). He makes clear elsewhere in his email post that he sees animation as part of a much broader cultural context, but the difference is that he wishes for animation to *lead* his examination of that context. (Hence: primacy). And this is characteristic of many people's scholarly work: they are basically looking at the same material, but approaching it from different angles.<sup>2</sup>

This phenomenon was encountered in Part One, when the discussion turned to Steve Fuller's work on 'social epistemology'. His arguments regarding how to detect the presence or otherwise of disciplinary boundaries are useful here, in relation to Animation and Film Studies. He states:

When the claims of one discipline conflict with those of another, which discipline yields to the other's cognitive authority? [. . .] When the cognitive resources of one discipline are insufficient to solve one of its own problems, which other discipline "just outside" its boundary is invoked for help? When the validity of claims in one discipline is challenged, the validity of claims in which other disciplines is most threatened? Not only should the answers to these questions be expected to change over time, but they are also likely to be asymmetrical (Fuller, 193-4)

These questions are echoed in Cholodenko's contentions about the role of animation as a knowledge field in relation to Film Studies. As intimated earlier, Cholodenko does not really make a great call for - or defence of - 'Animation Studies' as such. He seems far more interested in the ways that rethinking animation also causes us to rethink some commonly accepted

boundaries, divisions and theories (particularly, for Cholodenko, and Watson, those of Film Studies). Animation is seen as a kind of 'catalyst', or intellectual irritant, making us ask awkward questions of existing disciplines (like Film Studies, but also a wide range of other disciplines, as Cholodenko's anthology attests). Perhaps this is the key way to think about animation: not as a completely coherent field or discipline, but as a 'multi-sited' field. This could perhaps be thought of as an inversion of the idea of animation as a 'meeting point' of 'other' disciplines. Instead of animation existing in a place at the boundaries of related disciplinary knowledge areas, in sufficiently coherent a sense to constitute a(n inter-) discipline in its own right, it is instead a rather more diffuse - but nonetheless epistemologically potent - set of ideas, theories, methods. Yet the problem remains of how to adequately account for such apparent 'diffuseness', and the related issue of animation appearing to 'be' in a number of different places.

Klein (1993) has talked of 'blurring, cracking, and crossing' boundaries, and how the relationship between the so-called 'frontier' of a discipline and its 'core' are important. She also notes the *rhetorical* nature of a lot of the terminology (as I have noted in relation to the rhetorical/strategic use of terms). For instance:

The blurring of disciplinary boundaries is typically associated with research at the innovative frontier of [a] discipline, the rhetorical foil of the established cooling core. As a result of cracks the leading edge of a

boundary that divides two disciplines is often fuzzy, and talk of blurring is quickly accompanied by talk of interdisciplinarity (Klein, 187).

The suggestion of 'earthquake' terminology is fairly common - mention of 'fault lines', as well as 'hot' new research (to contrast with the 'cooling' established work noted by Klein), and a general sense of knowledges being constantly in flux, bringing to mind lava flows. Another perhaps useful notion here is that of earthquakes having epicentres and aftershocks. Here I am thinking of a 'susceptible' area (i.e. one where there are the aforementioned 'fault lines') being the 'site' of an earthquake or tremor, but the effects of that movement radiating outwards in a concentric pattern. Indeed, it is often the case that an area can find itself subjected to a number of tremors, where the effects will overlap and magnify each other. This metaphor is helpful in conceptualising how 'movements' taking place on a disciplinary boundary might be felt in their full force *at that boundary*, but will also make some kind (albeit less) of an impact 'further in' the respective meeting disciplines. This might also go some of the way to explaining how a number of apparently 'localised' instances of boundary activity could actually constitute a more or less coherent knowledge area. That is, the 'ripples' radiating out from specific research enquiries overlap and reverberate (see Figure 1, on page 166). Conceptualising a knowledge area like animation as a series of related/overlapping (but, at times, seemingly disparate/diffuse) enquiries means we have to stress the discontinuous and fractured nature of the growth of knowledge in any particular discipline. Instead of a naive

'evolutionary' model of knowledge growth and disciplinary development, we need to think more in terms of a model that recognises disjunctions and apparent dead-ends. To fall back on the metaphor from earlier, it is possible for an area to lie dormant and then reawaken.

### **Animation as a 'discursive' field**

The ways that certain areas exist as a 'meeting point' for other knowledges is vital. Equally vital is the (productive) tension between 'insularity' and 'overlap' when it comes to thinking about knowledge areas and education. Certain areas seem to pride themselves on how much they fall into one of these categories - the former clearly allied to other terms such as 'purity' etc., the latter allied to possible 'dilution'. I'd like to discuss these broad conceptual issues in relation to the notion of *discursivity* within and between fields of knowledge.

The concept of discursivity in the sense that I am using it here derives from Foucault. Perhaps the most immediately applicable use of the term is in Alvarado and Ferguson's 1983 essay 'The Curriculum, Media Studies and Discursivity'. Theirs is a polemical stance that sees the concept of discursivity, and the field of Media Studies as a way out of the impasse in which education found itself. I'd like to briefly discuss their use of the term discursivity and how it impacts on conceptualising animation as a field. In many respects, discursivity covers the ways that something relates to its



near-neighbours - in short, does it 'ignore' them? does it 'talk' to them? - and it therefore makes us address the ways that animation relates to areas like Media and Film. Although discursivity is by no means a straightforwardly positive term, it can be viewed in a positive light in the sense that it implies dialogue, some kind of engagement, and so on. However, discursivity also implies another term (which may or may not be usefully referred to as its 'opposite'): that is, 'recursivity'. If the discursive is describing the relationship between things that are in some kind of dialogic relationship (which is not to imply that that 'dialogue' is necessarily 'equal'), then the recursive tends to describe something that is in some sense in dialogue 'with itself'. Again, this is not an inherently good or bad thing, but it does give us a conceptual term with which we can explore issues surrounding the relative/perceived insularity or permeability of certain knowledge areas. In short, a 'discursive' field could be seen as positive in the sense that it is engaging with 'other' areas, but this could lead to some dilution or confusion (a loss of specificity). On the other hand a 'recursive' field can be thought of as one that reflects upon itself, maintains some sense of itself as *itself*, and this can lead to a highly-developed idea of the field, but can also tend towards divorcing the knowledge from its social context/s, and developing the area in the sense of 'keeping up with new developments' (which, by definition, means 'looking outside of' the knowledge area itself).

Alvarado and Ferguson are concerned to point out that the curriculum

(c. 1983, though many of their arguments are still relevant) should move towards a model that does not offer seemingly straightforward 'presentations' - i.e. 'knowledge' as a set of facts 'about' the world. Rather, it should recognise - and teach - in a reflexive way that openly acknowledges the discursivity of the teaching process. Thus:

the core of the curriculum would consist neither of a set of facts nor a series of processes but rather of a recognition of the fundamental notion of *symbolic systems*. This would involve the understanding that *all* experience is constituted *by, through and in relation to* a range of symbolic systems and discursive practices . . . Deriving out of them would be an engagement with all (or as many as feasible) of the areas of 'knowledge'. Pupils would be offered a theoretical base and structure upon which to build their understanding of the complexities of the world as opposed to empirical accounts ['about' the world] (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983: 31. Original emphasis).

Alvarado and Ferguson's chief aim is to point to the curriculum's inability to deal with contradictions and ideological fissures. They see the most significant factor in contributing to this inability as the *realist* epistemology of the curriculum. There is an irony here of course

because *realism* as dominantly conceived is ironically incapable of adequately handling, representing or analysing the complexities of the *real* in an active or productive way - of looking at the *real* as a dynamic, as process, as change (ibid., 20. Original emphasis).

The idea of 'discourse' is functioning on two levels. Firstly, as a noun, i.e. that of the 'discourse' of any particular subject or discipline (i.e. how it re/presents things, in what way/s it says things, the 'discursive formations' that it uses). Secondly, as a verb, i.e. as something that has to be *done* and

*negotiated*, rather than a neutral 'pathway' through a set of facts and figures. I would also add that there is another double meaning here: the sense on the one hand of discourse as the 'internal logic' of a particular discipline or subject; but, on the other hand of seeing discourse as the way that a discipline or subject relates to 'other' subjects, particularly those that are perceived to have much in common with the discipline in question. In short, the term 'discourse' (and the related 'discursivity') is complex and multi-layered, and forces us to ask lots of questions about how a subject area represents *'its'* knowledge, how it represents itself as a knowledge area, and, perhaps most importantly here, how it sees itself *in relation to* other areas.

This is where the distinction between the terms discursive and recursive is very useful. I think that the essentially realist conception of knowledge and the curriculum to which Alvarado and Ferguson point is one that relies overmuch on what I would term a *recursive* model of how knowledge areas relate to each other. This is not disagreeing with the bases of Alvarado and Ferguson's argument, but rather it is developing what they argue. Discourse/discursive tends to mean 'flowing into' or 'flowing from one place to another' (note that 'cursive' is a particular kind of writing - joined up writing - that 'flows' rather than one where individual elements remain distinct, like in old manuscripts), with the implication being that one thing is 'flowing into' or interacting with, having a 'dialogue' with another thing. From

this comes the general/common sense idea of 'discourse' as a 'conversation' between two or more parties. Recursive, on the other hand, means 'to flow back into', to go back to, to return - i.e. something flowing back into itself. And the crucial additional point to be made here is that recursivity, unlike discursivity, relies on things remaining separate or insular. Thus, the traditional view of the curriculum consisting of a series of separate subjects that have distinct 'contents' (something that is exacerbated by their separation at the level of teaching - into recognisable periods of time with different staff etc.) is a decidedly recursive position. As Alvarado and Ferguson make clear, a knowledge area such as Media Studies, as a fertile meeting point of many other subject 'voices', offers an important way that such recursivity can be challenged and replaced by a more positive discursivity. My point is that Animation exists in a similar fashion, making explicit those important issues of dialogue in and between subject areas. All this is not to say that recursivity is an entirely negative factor, but that it needs to be seen as being in a relationship of productive tension with discursivity: how subjects and disciplines negotiate the friction between their 'core' issues and those deemed to be 'marginal' is of course the most obvious manifestation of such a productive tension.

Douglas R. Hofstadter (1980) has written about the terms *recursive* and *recursion* (the latter of these is what I am calling *recursivity*, in order to stress the links to *discursivity*). He describes two meanings for the term.

First of all, there is a recursive figure, which draws on the distinction between *figure* and *ground*. That is

[w]hen a figure . . . e.g. a human form . . . is drawn inside a frame, an unavoidable consequence is that its complementary shape - also called the "ground", or "background" . . . - has also been drawn. In most drawings . . . this figure-ground relationship plays little role . . . [b]ut sometimes, an artist will take interest in the ground as well (67).

Hofstadter's main example of such an artist is Escher, whose drawings demonstrate that '[e]ach figure-ground boundary in a recursive figure is a double-edged sword' (ibid.). One cannot distinguish with any certainty what is 'figure' and what is 'ground' or, rather, each element of the drawings can be *both* figure *and* ground, the distinction between them is made ambiguous. Escher's works therefore seem to embody a paradox: they seem to 'go on forever' and yet be 'bounded' or 'closed off'. But the sense in which they seem to 'go on forever' is a recursive one: that is, it is only by commenting on 'itself' that a work by Escher seems to 'perpetuate' itself. As Hofstadter puts it: 'A *recursive* figure is one whose ground can be seen as a figure in its own right' (ibid.). In other words, they can be seen as 'all figure' and 'no ground'.

Applying these concepts to disciplinary structures and the curriculum is useful in the sense noted above. If a discipline falls into the (epistemologically 'realist') trap that Alvarado and Ferguson outline, then it can also, arguably, be termed 'recursive'. That is, knowledge is presented

as an unproblematic 'set of facts', clearly demarcated from 'other' sets of facts. This clear demarcation offers a seductive vision of knowledge areas, where they are quite literally reduced to 'all [facts and] figure[s]' and 'no [back]ground'. This is problematic because what gets lost is the potentially useful links that knowledge areas have to other areas, and the related fact that *all* knowledge areas have a *background*. This 'background' could simply be equated to the broader 'social context', but it also needs to be recognised that a knowledge area's relationship with other knowledge areas, and how it fits into the social and institutional contexts of which it is a part, are elements of this background. They are also precisely the 'discursive' dimension that Alvarado and Ferguson speak of.

Hofstadter suggests a second meaning of the term 'recursive', which could be equally useful when considering disciplinary structures. He defines this as 'nesting, and variations on nesting' (127). What he means by 'nesting' in this context is something akin to '[s]tories inside stories, movies inside movies, paintings inside paintings . . . .' (ibid.). But, he warns, we 'should be aware that [this] meaning of "recursive" . . . is only faintly related to [the first] meaning' (ibid.). This second meaning draws on some basic terms of computer science (Hofstadter, the very definition of a polymath, has expertise in music, mathematics, a PhD in theoretical physics, and teaches Computer Science) to see recursion as a set of complex 'stacks' or 'levels'. Even the simplest of computer programs work on the basis of

commands that take one down a certain pathway, which then might require one to put *that part* of the command 'on hold' (or in a 'stack') while one goes down another pathway (or down another 'level'). This can continue more or less indefinitely, but the outcome is that the program will eventually fulfil all its functions and end. In order to do so, it has to 'reverse' the stack by going back up the levels.

Hofstadter uses the metaphor of the Russian dolls at one point, and this underlines why this type of recursion *isn't* simply 'something being defined in terms of *itself* . . . but always [something being defined] in terms of *simpler versions* of itself' (127). The notion of descending a level in order to *clarify* is an interesting one, as is the metaphor of something 'nesting' inside something else, particularly in relation to knowledge areas. The conception offered earlier - of overlapping 'epicentres' of animation-related activity perhaps constituting what is perceived by some to be a coherent Animation Studies 'project' - could be reformulated so that, instead of 'epicentres', we talk of 'nests'. The idea of nodes of enquiry, situated in diverse positions (e.g. 'within' Film Studies, Art and Design, History, Engineering . . .), yet in some sense constituting a knowledge area in their own right as well, is an interesting one. However, this sense of recursion seems closer to 'discursivity' in that it actively acknowledges the *relationship* between different knowledge areas. This seeming contradiction certainly requires more attention, and I shall return to aspects of this discussion in Chapters 8

and 9, where I explore Animation as a community and typology of practitioners, and reintroduce the concepts of discursivity, recursivity and 'nesting', as initially outlined here.<sup>3</sup>

To conclude this chapter, however, I wish to return to the debate between Bradbury and Langer. While not suggesting that one is calling for a more discursive approach while the other is calling for a more recursive approach, it is certainly the case that their positions can usefully be discussed in the light of these terms. As noted above, they both recognise that animation needs to be viewed in a wider context, but I would suggest that Langer's position is one that embraces discursivity more wholeheartedly. As he states at one point:

The most illuminating work on animation that I read . . . is generally work produced by historical polymaths. There is a world of ideas, methodologies and historical experience that animation scholars should be embracing, rather than retreating from in some disciplinary quarantine. [At a recent conference] my knowledge of animation was enriched by the contact that I had with scholars in a wide range of disciplines, such as history, psychiatry, urban studies, comics, architecture, cultural studies, the social sciences, etc. etc . . . We need more of this. And we definitely should not be wrapping ourselves up in a shroud of historical purity (Langer, 2000b).

The call for an Animation Studies that is actively in dialogue with as wide a range of 'other' disciplines as possible could not be clearer. And, in many respects, it is the opportunity for such a 'multi-disciplinarity' that appears to attract Langer to animation as an object of study (though arguably *any* object could be approached in this manner).



Bradbury's approach is arguably more 'recursive' in the sense that he seems to want to retain animation as the central focus of any analysis. Furthermore, this focus should thereby lead to a more nuanced understanding of animation as a representational practice, as *animation*. He states:

Donald Crafton acknowledged in . . . *Before Mickey* that animation is the least theorised of all film mediums . . . and thus would at least then have given plausibility to the pursuit of a discreet [sic] study of animation. Yes we can subsume animation as film studies and have the result of animation as a ghetto of film studies . . . [Yet] [a]nimation to survive had to become part of economic[ally] established flows. But in what ways did animation transform or enhance those practices? (Bradbury, 2000b).

His worry that animation will become subsumed to the interests of Film Studies is, generally speaking, something that might bother a lot of academics: that 'their' subject is 'taken over' by something else. Yet, until we more fully understand how a 'map' of related knowledge areas might 'fit together' - and how some subjects can apparently exist in a number of places, while still retaining a sense of focus and identity - then we will struggle to move beyond what are, frankly, simplistic theories of how disciplines overlap and hold apart. The concepts of discursivity/recursivity, along with the notions of overlapping 'seismic' activity, and Hofstadter's 'nesting', are important moves towards this fuller understanding.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene II, where Polonius describes the actors as: 'The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral . . .'

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<sup>2</sup> This links into what Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001: 8-9) say about people using different discursive registers depending on the context in which they are communicating. In many respects the differing positions elaborated by Bradbury and Langer emphasise the 'multimodality' of the discourses surrounding Animation as a field of knowledge. They are able to communicate and be understood precisely because they are talking about the 'same' thing in 'different' ways, but also 'different' things in the 'same' ways; it is the position of Animation in their 'field of vision' that differs, yet it is the fact that they are both grappling with what Animation *is*, and how it might best be *understood*, that draws together what they are saying.

<sup>3</sup> As well as reintroducing some of the key terms from this chapter in Chapter 9, I will also discuss Lave and Wenger's concepts of 'situated learning' and 'legitimate peripheral participation' which are very useful for theorising how different sets of people, engaged in a variety of ostensibly different activities, find some common ground.

● = 'site' of animation-related enquiry

— = border between disciplines

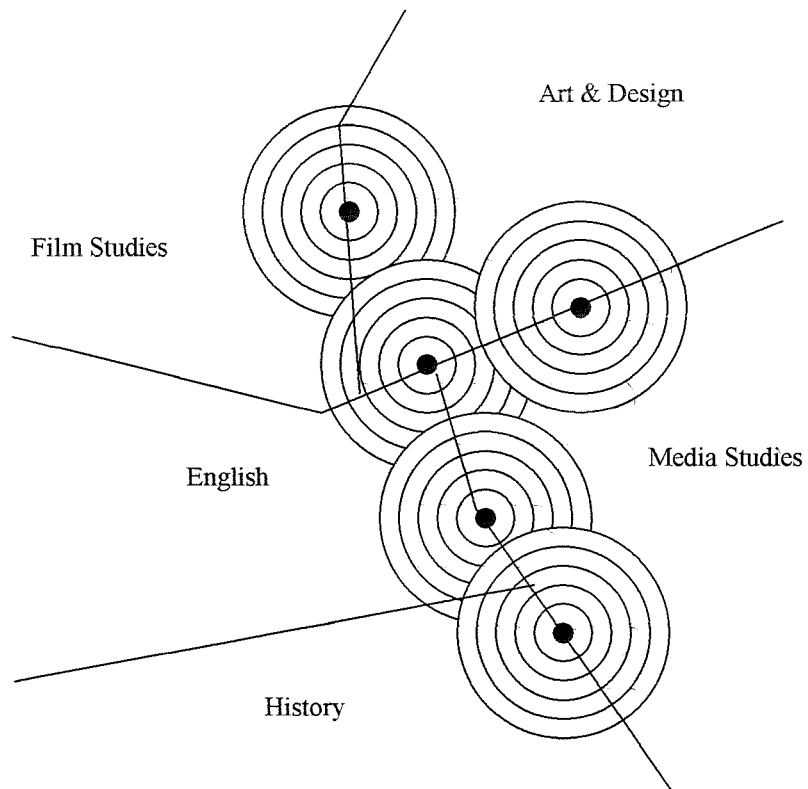


Figure 1

## **Chapter 6**

### **Theory, practice and pedagogy: a consideration of Media-related courses and animation**

#### **Introduction**

One of the central concerns of those teaching Film and Media Studies should be the relationship between theory and practice. This relationship has been addressed in a number of contexts, and with various attempts to privilege one over the other. My approach is that practice and theory should be recognised as two elements of a dialectically linked process, and this recognition should then lead to a reflexive integration, where the two are actively interrogated by both students and teachers. This is by no means a new idea, and this chapter will outline the historical dimension of these debates and issues. It will also address some of the underlying contradictions and tensions in practical and theoretical approaches, and attempts to combine the two. In so doing, I shall engage with how a diverse area such as Media Studies (and all its 'relatives') came to be seen as having a specific set of functions or roles to play. The function that teaching about and learning the Media has come to assume needs interrogating in the light of Gramscian ideas about education (especially those on vocationalism and classical approaches), Bernstein's analysis of curricula in terms of classification and framing, and Lindahl-Elliott's adaptation of Bernstein's notion of pedagogic discourse in order to discuss practice and theory approaches to teaching the media. All of these shall be discussed in

order to move on and talk about how animation is constructed as a curriculum 'content', a 'theory', a 'practice', and its position in debates about vocationalism, craft, and training.

Pedagogically speaking, the interlinked and overlapping subjects of Film and Media represent a particularly problematic relationship between theory and practice. Indeed, it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that there has been an almost wilful 'separation' of the two in the minds of many students and some teachers. Due to the fact that Media courses (including Film, Media etc.) engage with Media artefacts, it is unsurprising that attempting to 'make' such artefacts - that is, engaging in practical work - is seen as a way of better understanding 'how they work'. This follows a great tradition in education, namely, instrumentalism. The engagement in practical work is seen not simply as an end in itself but as a means to a greater end, that of knowledge about how a particular (kind of) text might operate. There are some nuances to a term like instrumentalism, which shall be teased out later, particularly in relation to Gramsci's 'instrumental class'. What I am getting at here is that practical work can be used either as an end in itself (for the moment we can associate this with 'vocational' orientations, where learning 'how to' is the main focus), or it can be used to better understand *how* (and in what socio-historical contexts) media artefacts work. This latter tendency is essentially the 'deconstruction' pointed to by Ferguson (1981) and Buckingham (1992) for example.

This is all very well, but how accurately does this reflect the actual state of affairs on many courses? In the context of this research project, I am looking at how the relationship is figured in the teaching of animation. But before we can move on to discuss this specific relationship, by referring to some actual examples of courses, we first of all need to outline the meanings of some of the terms in this debate. As well as sketching out what 'theory' and 'practice' mean, and how they inter-relate, it is also very important to discuss the ways that they are deployed in 'pedagogic discourse'. In other words, what are the perceived 'outcomes' or results of teaching 'theory' or 'practice', or in a way that attempts to integrate the two? Once this is done, we can then talk about the ways in which this is figured in animation teaching. As we shall see, animation offers a very interesting site for discussing these issues, not least because of its contentious position vis-à-vis other areas such as Art, Film and Media.

### **The perceived functions of practical work**

Bob Ferguson (1981) offers a useful general outline of issues relating to practical work and pedagogy. The first thing to be made clear is that, despite its common-sense connotations, 'practical' work should not simply be conflated with practical exercises or projects. In the Film/Media area, this all too easily sees 'practice' collapsed into 'the fun bit', or the 'creativity', something that has led to untold difficulties for the teaching of the subject.

As Ferguson points out:

Practical work does not only include the business of 'making films' or making a television programme', or 'using video', but has to be seen as the total activity of the teacher and the students in or out of the classroom when they are together as a group. This means that the approach to pedagogy adopted by the teacher is quite crucial to the development of film, television and media studies in schools. It also raises important issues about teaching strategies, learning theories and the notion of creativity (41).

Although Ferguson is reflecting upon the school context, I would suggest that precisely the same issues are central to teaching at Higher Education (HE) level. The one thing I would add here is that the HE context (not to mention certain changes in the two decades between now and when Ferguson was writing) perhaps foregrounds even more the 'need' for students to equip themselves with skills deemed to be useful in the job market. This is something that Colin McArthur points to as the 'managerialist' discourse of certain courses: changes in how education is managed (as well as how media institutions are regulated) have led to what he calls 'the Gadarene rush to serve "the market"' (McArthur, unpublished manuscript). The expansion of what we might term 'media jobs' (everything from film/TV/video industry jobs, journalism-related jobs, and now 'new media' posts) appears to offer an inexhaustible supply of opportunities for the right graduates. These issues have led to an interesting debate about the role of 'vocational' training, and its relationship to HE, more of which later. They also go right to the centre of debates about 'creativity', and the role and function of 'practice' in educational contexts. Before moving on to

explore some of these issues though, it is worthwhile analysing some of the problems raised by Ferguson's article.

First of all, it is worth noting that he clearly connects the 'practice' of doing certain things - using video etc. - with the 'practice' of teaching and learning - 'the total activity of the teacher and the students'. The 'practical work' using the video etc. is not seen as somehow magically separate from analysis and study. The exercises or projects are part of a process of learning: not simply learning 'how to do it', but of locating what is being done and how one does it in a broad context of knowledge. In a sense, there are levels to the notion of 'practice', so that even when students and teacher are participating in a 'theoretical' class discussion they can be said to be engaging in 'practice'; it is just a different kind of 'practice' from that which uses equipment. It is even 'creating' something, though that something is not quite so tangible as producing a video. That something might be referred to as 'knowledge' or 'learning', or perhaps as a 'consensus', or simply 'argument' (or 'apathy', depending on who is in the class, and the relative skills of the teacher). This is one of the key points of all the debates about media education and practice/practical work: when we use the term 'practice', we must constantly keep in mind that we are talking about an educational context, so the notion of educational practice also has to be reflected upon. This is something that I return to when discussing pedagogy, as it emphasises the fact that those teaching media studies (or



anything else for that matter) should be reflective of their own practice, and their role in what is a process, not a simple one-way giving of information or knowledge.

Another key point is the role that creativity plays. Although in 1981 many courses in Film, Media, Communications etc. were in their infancy (or still in the planning stages), it is obvious 20 years later that there is still a misconception and misrepresentation of what most courses are about, and what intellectual and practical skills they impart. The stereotype of Media courses being 'the soft option', having no intellectual or academic rigour, is still with us today. (See Gaber and Phillips, 2000 for some examples of such discourse in relation to journalism courses). Historically speaking, 'media lessons' were used as a way of involving certain sectors of the student body: 'film and media studies became a potential means of keeping recalcitrant, apathetic or bored students occupied' (Ferguson, 41). It is easy to see how this might translate, even years later, and after many clear examples of how film and media courses offer intellectual rigour, and vital analytical/critical skills, into an idea of such courses being for the academically less able, or easy option. The main 'point' here is the rather debilitating suggestion that anyone who embarks on analysing the media is wasting not only their time, but everyone else's time (and, up until recently, and still today if you happen to be Scottish, wasting taxpayers' money). It is hardly worth pointing out that most of the vitriol poured onto media courses

emanates from the media. Alongside this, it is worth observing some rather more subtle problems. One is that the 'creative' practical work is separated from the idea of intellection or analysis. If it is done first and foremost to 'occupy' rather than in and of itself, or to discover/reveal the processes at work in the act of mediation, and if the people being 'occupied' by it are deemed to be not capable of certain things (i.e. the analysis seen in certain other disciplines), then it is hardly surprising that a view of practical work as somehow separate from/not worthy of analysis has developed. It has been nurtured very carefully to appear so by a particular view of 'creativity', one that leans heavily on it as an artistic 'outburst' of sorts. Rather than seeing practice as a process of meaning construction, it is placed in the realm of 'romanticised' creativity.

David Buckingham (1992) identifies three main ways that practical work can function: as self-expression, as a method of learning, and as deconstruction. Clearly, one might argue that there are considerable overlaps between these three positions. One could approach a practical project in a way that 'deconstructs' certain conventional ways of doing things, thereby 'learning' how to do something, and also 'express oneself'. Certainly there are overlaps, but Buckingham is pointing to the ways that practical work is variously perceived (conceived?), and the ways that it is realised and used in particular institutional contexts, rather than stating any inherent differences. The fact is, practical work can have specific functions

according to its context, and it is worth spending some time outlining the common assumptions underlying these functions. In fact, one of the main arguments here is that concerning the gap between how practical work is *perceived* to be working and how it is *actually* working, especially when we take on board the work of Lindahl-Elliot. There are ways in which practice is thought to relate to theory - common-sense ways - and it is important to interrogate this relationship, particularly when we turn to how the relationship works in terms of animation.

The first has connotations of Art - the use of practical work as an expression of inner feelings. This is obviously a strong (and long) tradition in the history of both Art and education. Equally clearly, we can see it as an underlying rationale for a number of approaches to teaching animation, more of which later. As Buckingham points out, this strand can be subdivided into two: 'on the one hand the tradition that developed in art colleges, and on the other, youth and community work' (63). It is not hard to discern a split here that Gramsci would find problematic. The former tends to position the practical as something that 'expresses' an 'artistic' mind, the preserve, pretty much, of those in an elite position, those with the cultural capital to appreciate what they are producing (see Bourdieu, 1984; Wolff, 1993). The latter tends to position the practical work, the Art, as something that addresses issues arising in youth and community contexts. These, with some exceptions, are going to tend to address a perceived imbalance or

lack: the youth who need something to do to stop them from vandalising the community, the offenders who are given art therapy, the dispossessed/under-represented who are given 'access' as part of an 'emancipatory' agenda. Much of this work is useful and well-meaning. But it offers up a form of practice as a 'solution' to specific problems and, as such, offers it up in a very different way to the former position.

On the other hand, we could view this split as one that ossifies political positions in a different way: the elitist 'Art' conservatives, and the progressive use of art and practice as a way into challenging them. In this sense, the artistic practice takes on a 'political inflection . . . assisting the democratisation both of local politics and of the media themselves' (63). Buckingham cites Dowmunt's community work with video as an example of this. Although we need to be wary of simple overstatements (as seen in some aspects of the so-called 'critical pedagogy' debates in relation to media studies, e.g. Sholle and Denski 1994)) that tend to suggest that giving the dispossessed access to the means of production (in this case video) will somehow instantly 'empower' them, it is certainly the case that allowing people to engage with practice and production is a valuable way of 'giving them a voice', and may well lead to a broader understanding of social and political issues. There is a strong tradition of seeing animation in this way. Perhaps this is something to do with the fact that animation is often perceived as more of an individual pursuit than, say, video work, (or

live action production work in general) which tends, of necessity, to be carried out in groups. However, there are also those who have used animation in the community context, and who very much challenge the idea of the individualised, artistic pursuit - the Leeds Animation Workshop would be a key example here. The practical work exists as a form of 'self-expression' but this expression is very much concerned with expressing a political view, which by definition makes explicit connections with social realities. This is in stark contrast to the idea of artistic practice (whether video, animation, whatever) as a somehow context-free, transcendent expression of someone's 'inner self'. Although these two positions seem very different they are similar in the sense that the practical work is seen as a way of 'expressing' something.

The second of the categories that Buckingham points to is 'practical work as a method of learning'. As already noted, there are considerable overlaps between this category and the previous one. The 'self-expression' could be the expression of something that someone has learned. Buckingham points to the ways that using media practice as a method of learning has a strong connection with 'underachievers'. The idea with this orientation towards practical work appears to be that people can *learn by doing*. The examples given suggest that, if not monitored carefully, this could lead to a simple, and damaging, emulation of professional practice in specific areas (e.g. children 'learning' how to speak in a way that emulates

TV presenters). Thus, rather than the artistic 'expression' of something (with the implicit suggestion that such an 'expression' cannot possibly be something that has been 'learned' from somewhere, and normalised), we have practical work functioning in such a way as to encourage/valorise the acquisition of practical skills as an end in itself. Indeed, this orientation towards practical work is the closest to a straightforward 'training' discourse, though it is by no means simply reducible to it.

The third possible orientation towards practical work is the one that is most widespread in combined courses (i.e. those that combine theoretical and practical approaches to the media): practical work as deconstruction. As the term suggests, in its least reflexive form, this involves an implicit rejection of the positive use of practice - i.e. as an expressive, *constructive* activity - in favour of an approach that foregrounds the use of practical exercises to help take apart specific (usually 'dominant') media practices. Buckingham quotes Masterman here: instead of 'doing your own thing with a portapak' the latter argues strongly that video practice should be used to investigate the established codes of (in this case) television. This is all very well, but it tends to 'decouple' practice from theory, or rather to reconstitute what is a complex and dialectical relationship as one where practice 'serves' theory. Or as Buckingham states:

this approach . . . runs the risk of 'theoreticism' - of emphasising theoretical concerns at the expense of the students' motivation to produce their own messages. There are clearly dangers in an exclusive

emphasis on critical analysis, which constantly seeks to deconstruct dominant forms yet fails to encourage students to develop and to interrogate their *own* position (66, emphasis in original).

In the example quoted above, for instance, Masterman proposes that practice should be used in the context of 'deconstructing' (and thereby, presumably, 'understanding') mainstream television. The practice would be carried out in conjunction with both critical analyses of the practical exercises produced and 'theoretical' and institutional analyses of television. The problem is, although the practical work will, by isolating specific televisual 'codes', possibly offer some route into understanding how these codes work, this understanding is somewhat different from the knowledge Masterman suggests it is. That is, the practical work is being carried out with specific resources (such as 'portapaks' rather than 'proper' television equipment, perhaps?), and in a specific institutional context. To carry out practical exercises in one context and then analyse them as 'illustrations' of what is another context is misleading. This is not to say that one cannot learn something about TV (or film, or animation) by undertaking practical work on a course. Rather, it is a call for more attention to the specific conditions under which students are actually working. This 'attention' can then be read as part of a broader context of audio-visual/cultural production: the students' work seen critically as part of a (set of) tradition(s) rather than some failed attempt to either 'emulate' someone else's practice, or find their 'own' voice.

Dan Fleming notes a similar problem in relation to Media practice (Fleming, 2000), couching it in terms of a tension between the 'heuretic' and the 'hermeneutic'. As Fleming suggests, media courses need to transcend

the sterile tension between, on the one hand, [their] critical, interpretive and analytic intentions and, on the other, media practice as mere technical or production training. . . . What has been missing, perhaps, is the concept of a heuretic practice to set alongside interpretive and analytical work - in other words, a use of media technologies and forms of production in a critically *inventive* mode (389-90, original emphasis).

Basically, this goes to the heart of the role of practical work on Media Studies courses, suggesting that a use of practice that merely 'backs up' or illustrates the interpretive or analytical work is hardly making the most of the potential of practice. As well as the interpretive (hermeneutic), what is needed is an inventive/creative mode (heuretic, sometimes called heuristic). As Fleming notes, the central point of the heuretic is that of *development*: '[w]ithin the heuretic tradition . . . it is the continuing process of invention and elaboration that matters' (390). In this respect, he proposes 'devising *genres* of practice that carry, or dramatise, the heuretic intention' (391), so that we can avoid students' falling back on emulation of genres such as the pop video. At the same time, Fleming is highly critical of the position where 'learners somehow use their practical work to explore what they have learned theoretically [which can lead to] portentously intellectualised practice' (ibid.). Such a tendency to reduce practical work like this can lead to some interesting work, but it will fall into the category of formal experiment (or, more damningly, 'formalism'). As the term 'heuretic' implies,



there is some sense of developing or going beyond what has been learned in 'another' context. I am obviously not saying that the practice is not informed by the theory at all, but it must be seen as being informed by much else besides. As Mike Wayne argues, in sketching a typology of practitioners: '[p]ractice has to be understood as sensuous and concrete . . . it exceeds what was already known. Practice is labour, production, activity, not a passive mirror held up to "theory"' (Wayne, 2000: 31). The key difference between what Wayne terms the 'theoretical practitioner' and a truly 'critical practitioner' resides in how they orient themselves to the theoretical possibilities and the practical choices available to them, and how all of this is understood as part of a broader set of contexts. (I return to this typology of practitioners, specifically in relation to Animation, in Chapter 9).

More often than not in courses involving some form of Media practice, one of the key approaches to carrying out practical production work is via group work. This is premised on ideas of replicating some form of 'working practice', and encouraging a collaborative dimension. The idea of group work and its centrality to many discourses about practical work is that it is in some ways in *opposition* to the creative act, which is seen as the 'work' of an individual mind. (A phrase that is often used to characterise this 'anti-creative' impulse is 'this looks like it was made by a committee', implying that it is either confused, banal, or both). This ties in with issues around assessment: it is all very well saying that group work is essential, but how

do we get around the fact that sometimes it doesn't work? how do we assess the sometimes varying inputs by different people doing different things? All of this needs to be related back to the debates about individual work and intellectualism (or theory?) being a cornerstone of dominant paradigms of education, and group work being (rightly or wrongly) associated with practical work, 'exercises' which are somehow subordinate to the 'proper' knowledge of theory, and the whole lot being tied to narrow ideas of vocationalism or training. So there are issues to address in terms of how group work is viewed, and we also then need to look at how it is used (or not) in relation to animation. First of all, we need to outline some of the consequences of attempting to integrate theory and practice.

### **The integration of theory and practice: *Theorising Video Practice***

To my knowledge, Mike Wayne's *Theorising Video Practice* (1997) is still the only book-length attempt to grapple with the issues facing anyone teaching an 'integrated' approach to theory and practice in higher education. Firmly grounded with examples from student work, the book offers an overtly political engagement with this terrain. Wayne starts by opening out the notion of (video) practice: 'in my view, the three distinct but interfacing moments of production, text and consumption all form part of a single term, "video practice"' (1997: 1). Although the book concentrates on the 'negotiation of formal strategies at the point of (video) production' (ibid.) - that is, it discusses how one might engage with particular signifying

practices - this tri-partite conceptualisation of 'video practice' is helpful because it recognises that the term 'practice' encompasses more than the 'making' of something. Indeed, the recognition of 'consumption' as an element of practice is vital, as it underlines the fact that this involves an *active* engagement (though this 'activity' is carried out with varying levels of self-consciousness and sophistication). Furthermore, the positioning of consumption as part of practice emphasises the fact that even the most apparently 'spontaneous' creativity is actually the result of one's exposure to, and engagement with, the mass of cultural history that surrounds us. As Wayne points out, 'we have to be aware of how cultural history has left us with (following Gramsci) an "infinity of traces gathered together without the advantage of an inventory"' (11). This is a good example of how a theoretically-informed approach to one's consumption will, in turn, recognise that it plays central role in any production practices that one engages in.

Wayne suggests that

In the [higher?] education system a tripartite division has developed between: a) theoretical courses in film, television and media studies; b) vocational courses which aim to train labour for its insertion into the day to day running of film and television organisations; c) practical arts-based courses which aim to cultivate individual authorial expression (1997: 13-14).

This formulation has something in common with Lindahl-Elliott's position (for which, see below), and is certainly also suggestive of the ways in which approaches to teaching animation have evolved. Wayne locates the

divisions between certain forms of practice within the developments and needs of the highly specific institutional contexts. That is, we have courses that approach the subject as a) intellectual, and therefore 'theoretical' in orientation, b) practical, but with a view to 'train' people so that they can fulfil an 'industrial' role, and c) practical, but viewing that practice as 'Art', thereby lifting the individual's role to that of an 'author'. There is a seemingly wilful split between the act of thinking about/theorising and the actual act of cultural production/practice. As Wayne argues, the reasons for this split are embedded in the complex histories of not only education but the general shifts of society - as he puts it, 'the large-scale structural transformations of the last four hundred years' (14). This has led to two dominant positions within which practice is articulated. First, the craftworker, who embodies the notion of transferability and professionalism while working in a set of institutional contexts that tend to 'rationalise' creativity. 'Transferability' in the sense that the craftworker should be able to apply themselves to a range of different projects as required; 'professional' in the sense that a set of normalised behaviours have evolved within which one should work, and attempting to move outside these constitutes a problem for wider working practices. The second position is that of the author, which offers a way of unifying a range of textual artefacts - with an attendant marker of 'value' - but also has 'associations . . . with autonomy and independence' (17) that are highly-valued in certain discourses about cultural practice.

These two positions vis-à-vis practice exist side by side. In many ways, this is inevitable in the production contexts that have achieved a measure of dominance. Wayne points out that the 'contradictions between bourgeois ideology (with its notion of individual creativity) and bourgeois economics (with its emphasis on profitability) requires cultural production to be split into two sectors' (1997: 18). As noted above, these are the realms of craftworker and author, but the important thing to note here is that *both* orientations toward practice are essential if the system of which they are part can continue to function. What one lacks in pragmatism, it makes up for in transcendence - and it seems that both these impulses are required. Indeed, it is this negotiation of the contradictions between a pragmatic, functional approach to (media) practice, and a more transcendent, 'artistic' approach, which structures attitudes to practical work, particularly in an educational context. While the craftworker orientation stresses 'the material, everyday nature of cultural production', the authorial orientation stresses 'the individual's role in shaping the end results of cultural production' (19). What Wayne suggests is that a more self-conscious integrating of practical work with theoretical reflection is needed, in order to obviate the shortcomings of both approaches on their own. Only through theory can one grasp that the structural constraints imposed on the craftworker, and the idea of an individual creative author are historically specific models of cultural practice. The question remains though: how to actually integrate practice with theory?

One suggestion is:

Rather than seeing theory and practice as distinct and separate activities, we need to see them as part of a continuum. The terms 'theory' and 'practice' refer to those circumstances and contexts in which either reflection on practice (theory) or the implementation of theory (practice) predominate. Ideally . . . these two activities should be constantly at play, emphasising now one, now the other (Wayne, 1997: 13)

This notion of theory and practice existing on a continuum is useful. I would develop this to conceptualise them as following an 'action research' model, as this places the two in a more dynamic relationship. The idea of action research is to think of elements existing at various points in a cycle, with the process offering a continual *refinement* of ideas and practices. So, a simple cycle might consist of three activities - planning, doing, reflecting - positioned at gradual points around a circle. The idea is then that one plans something, carries out the plans, reflects on what one has done, and this reflection then feeds into more planning and so on. Of these activities, certain ones would be seen as being nearer to 'theory' (reflection) and others nearer to practice (doing, planning). The fact is, that all activities in this cycle consist of practice and theory in a dynamic relationship. Furthermore, it is the cyclical, action research model which places practice and theory in an *overall* relationship of dynamism and process. It is ongoing, and the continual, refining aspect of this system might be simply stated as a form of the 'practice makes perfect' cliché - a gradual, reflective refining of one's practice so that it becomes, if not 'perfect', at least 'better'.

The main point here though is that the refinements, such as they are, are inextricably linked to the role of theory, and its relationship with practice.

### **The integration of theory and practice: Lindahl-Elliot**

Nils Lindahl-Elliot (1995) covers similar practice-theory terrain when he suggests that it is important for us to distinguish between 'efforts to develop more critical *reading* practices and efforts to develop more critical *media production* practices (98). The distinction here is simply that between teaching students ways to understand how things are constructed with a view to offering analysis (in the tradition of English Studies, where a 'reading' of specific aspects is given), and an approach that sees the teaching of practical/production issues as something more than the imparting of skills. As Lindahl-Elliot points out, there is a good deal of antipathy - from teachers as well as students - to actively combining these 'poles'. This leads to what he calls 'code switch[ing]': where concepts learned in the theoretical side of things are dismissed so that students can learn the 'proper' business of how to do it. A similar thing seems to happen in the way in which practical work is viewed in some discourses - that is, as a waste of time (or at best, a mere time filler) when compared to the 'real' learning of theoretical concepts. It is this 'never the twain shall meet' opposition that structures many common-sense paradigms of Media Education. Either courses rely too much on practice and therefore are not academically rigorous enough, or they are not practical enough and

therefore do not equip their students to 'do' anything. (Though this of course ignores the fact that it does equip them to 'do' research and analysis, which is itself a practice).

Attempts to combine 'media theory and practice' are, according to Lindahl-Elliott, problematic. This is because courses that attempt to do so are

based on a double epistemological ellipsis: their educational logic - or what I will later describe as their pedagogic discourse - is based on the assumption that the specificity of the *research practice*, on the one hand, and of the production *discourses*, on the other, can somehow be ignored in order to produce a new, more critical synthesis: media theory and practice (99).

This, he suggests, leads to courses that do not achieve what they set out to do - that is 'produce a . . . critical synthesis' - but rather tend towards rhetorical constructions of what they are doing which ignore the very real differences between theory and practice. In many respects, this echoes a long-running set of issues in Media Education - the idea that 'practice' can be used unproblematically to 'illustrate' theory, that (media) practice will somehow automatically lead to 'empowerment' of the students. These problems are based on a similar ignoring of the 'specificity' of theory and practice. The two need to be seen as dialectically linked, but often they are not, despite statements to the contrary.

Before moving on to discuss how theory and practice debates impact on



the teaching of animation, we must spend a little more time outlining some of the conceptual framework. Lindahl-Elliot (1997; 2000) argues that many of the misconceptions surrounding theory and practice relationships are based on not fully understanding the complexities of the relationship. He usefully introduces the following distinctions:

1. Vocational modality
2. Autonomous modality

where vocational means 'courses which teach media (or other) theories and practices to prepare students for work in the media production market', and autonomous means those courses 'which teach them to develop what can be described as a *critical disposition* towards the media (or more widely towards popular culture' (2000, 19). This seems straightforward enough, but he then further sub-divides the vocational modality into (a) critical-vocational and (b) market-oriented. The market-oriented courses are those where 'the main objective . . . is to provide students with the knowledge necessary to compete for employment in one or more of the fields of media production' (ibid.). In critical-vocational courses, however, there is an 'attempt to educate critical producers - producers able to critique, and to avoid reproducing, such ideologies as sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism or scientism' (ibid.). The key word here of course is 'attempt'. Indeed, much of the point of Lindahl-Elliot's analysis is to contest the ease with which it is asserted that students can simply be educated in this way, to work in a way that theory informs their practice, and thereby makes them 'critical'.

Certainly, the institutional pressures on any practitioner can militate against them 'being critical' or trying new things. (I shall return to the notion of 'critical practice' in Chapter 9).

So, there are a number of sub-divisions between types of media theory-practice courses. First of all, there are those that 'simply' teach so that the students can then be inserted into the labour market and use their learned skills. In these courses it is not simply the case that *only* practice is taught, but that the way in which 'theory' is mobilised is simply to explain specific processes in a certain manner, and thereby 'naturalise' them. Theory simply becomes a way of 'explaining best practice'. In these types of courses, the practice is reduced to acquiring skills which will equip one to work in a way that is acceptable to mainstream industrial practice. Specific socio-economic conditions make such a positioning seem not only relevant, but downright essential: namely, the competitive nature of the jobs market, along with the massively expanded pool of graduates, make those courses that offer such instrumental 'fasttracking' (maybe with the latest equipment and a sexy job placement) seem much more useful than a course which allocates time and resources to learning about historical and theoretical contexts. So, leaving aside the thorny issue that some courses might actually teach approaches to practice in a way that contextualises the 'dominant' way of doing things and perhaps suggest ways that practitioners could therefore challenge this hegemony ('thorny' because any such

challenge would be de facto unacceptable), such a way of structuring a course is deemed incorrect because students spend valuable time learning things that seem not to have an immediate, instrumental use in the workplace. Proving that one can set up, shoot and edit an interview quickly (which is to say, 'conventionally') is of more immediate value to an employer in the media sector than being able to prove one's knowledge of 'other' modes of information/knowledge collection/re-presentation, their historical and political underpinnings, and so forth.

Lindahl-Elliot uses Bernstein's conceptual framework in order to discuss how practice and theory are inter-related, and how they are transmitted. We have already encountered, in Chapter 2, Bernstein's concepts of 'framing' and 'classification', and how they can help to understand how boundaries are maintained between curriculum contents and disciplines. These concepts appear again in Chapter 9, in relation to drawing a typology of animation practitioners. In terms of understanding how animation functions, it is also important to talk about the Bernsteinian notion of 'pedagogic discourse'. This is a 'principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into special relation with each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition' (quoted in Lindahl-Elliot, 1995: 101). As Lindahl-Elliot makes clear, the notion of 'pedagogic discourse' is a useful one for understanding how 'practice' and 'theory' are mobilised in teaching Media. It is apparent, for instance, that different courses will privilege

different aspects of learning about the Media (as noted above). This is where the term 'recontextualisation' comes in: Media courses of whatever kind are 'appropriating' discourses – from the liberal Arts degree tradition, from vocational courses, from embedded ideas of what constitutes 'professional practice', and so on – and attempting to synthesise them. As discourses are 'recontextualised', they undergo transformation though, and it is this idea that interests me in relation to Animation. As argued in Chapter 3, and developed in Chapter 5, the knowledge area we can call Animation is actually the conjunction of a large number of other disciplinary discourses. I also suggested in Chapter 5 that it is therefore most useful to talk of Animation as a *discursive* field, rather than as a conventional 'discipline'. In Bernsteinian terms, I would suggest that Animation can be defined as a 'recontextualising' discourse, in the sense that it offers a route into redefining (and hopefully better understanding) some of the problems and issues relating to digital culture. As noted in Chapter 5, we can certainly see Animation as what Drummond labels a 'second-order discipline', in that it 'derives' its approaches and concerns from 'somewhere else'. Here though, we can see that this is actually something that can be usefully rethought as Animation *appropriating* and *recontextualising* particular modes of inquiry and methodologies, and moving towards offering answers to particular questions. This is something I shall return to in Chapter 9 in particular. For the moment, I'd like to return to the notion of practice, via a discussion of Gramsci's ideas on education, and then moving on to discuss

vocationalism.

### **Gramsci: intellectuals and education**

The writings of Gramsci are very useful in helping to think through the role of practice and theory, in that they explore intellectual and manual labour, and the way that the two are very closely and dialectically linked. Although Gramsci's writings on education specifically are brief, they resonate throughout many of the debates on the role of education in social formations, the place of practical and theoretical activity, and the differences in the ways that these things might be taught.

One thing we can learn from Gramsci is that the socio-historical context is vital for any analysis. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith points out in one of the introductory sections of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*: 'All men [sic] are potentially intellectuals in the sense of having an intellect and using it, but not all are intellectuals by social function' (3). It is this term 'social function' that interests me here, for it goes to the centre of the issue of how theory and practice are perceived, which is, in turn, of central importance when thinking about how we might teach certain things. I would argue that everything we do constitutes 'practice' in the sense that it follows certain conventions and norms of behaviour. However, not everything we do is commonly perceived as practice - there is a divide, where some things are seen as 'practice' or 'practical', and others are seen as abstract, or

'theoretical'. So, it is this 'common perception' which defines how things are seen rather than anything inherent to the processes themselves. In the same way as only certain people are seen as proper intellectuals (i.e. intellectuals 'by social function'), it is the case that only certain things are seen as practice. Those things that are allied to craft, creativity, and labour (though some of these factors are more privileged in discussions of practice than others) fulfil this social function. This has the effect of reifying the position of practice, making it appear to be something that it is not (not that it is 'something else' entirely: but the process of reification tends to mask certain things, not tell the whole story and so forth).

Indeed, one of the things that is masked or effaced by this process is the very fact that practice/practical work in the context of education, does require a degree of thought, intellection, and so on, even if this only manifests itself in the simplest sense of 'planning' a project. More often than not, the thinking process actually involves complex issues and engagement with existing conventions, institutional positions etc., and the fact that this engagement rarely rises above an 'acceptance' of these (either an attempt to emulate, or an attempt to avoid, which might well fail, thereby leading to a kind of pessimistic 'that way must be best, then' feeling) is one of the main things that needs to be addressed.

Another key point that Gramsci raises is the notion of 'specialisation'. By

this he refers to the way in which 'each practical activity tends to create a new type of school for its own executives and specialists and hence . . . create[s] a body of specialist intellectuals at a higher level to teach in these schools' (26). Thus, 'a whole system of specialised schools, at varying levels, has been being [sic] created to serve entire professional sectors, or professions which are already specialised and defined within precise boundaries' (ibid.). Gramsci is talking in terms of the whole educational system, and the ways in which what he terms 'humanistic' teaching - or that which tends to teach an 'undifferentiated general culture, the fundamental power to think' - exists side by side with these more specialised seats of learning. Such specialisms are obviously linked to notions of 'training' and vocationalism (as opposed to the more 'general' teaching or education) - the idea that you are being taught (or trained) to do something not only specific, but socially useful. This raises problems about the 'humanistic' model: does this not teach people to 'do' anything? Or is it simply at the level of how 'generalised' it is, that it seems different from 'training'? Certainly, many liberal arts type degrees will, with varying levels of directness and sophistication, state that they wish to produce (or train?) 'critical thinkers' or some such phrase. If done in the context of a Media Studies course though, this will inevitably fall prey to the 'but what can you do?' questions of potential employers.

Gramsci further subdivides the types of schooling available. We already

have the 'fundamental division into classical and vocational' with the attendant split in who goes to which: the former for the 'dominant classes and intellectuals', the latter for 'the instrumental classes'. Historical developments led to the need for a third type of school, the 'technical (vocational, but not manual)'. Here perhaps we can make some useful comparisons to Lindahl-Elliot's categories of 'autonomous' (which Gramsci would recognise as 'classical'), 'market-oriented-vocational' (the Gramscian 'manual-vocational') and 'critical-vocational' ('technical-vocational').

Additionally, the concept of 'praxis', throws up lots of issues about the role of both theory and practice in educational contexts. Gramsci talks about 'vocational' and 'classical' modes of instruction - the former very much to teach (students of a certain class) a trade or skill, the latter to teach (ditto) 'proper' intellectual subjects. Clearly this remains the most dominant (though somewhat simplistic?) way of conceptualising the differences. Interesting here is the idea (following Bernstein and Lindahl-Elliot) as to what extent the ideas of Gramsci overlap with ideas of 'classification' and 'framing', and if this is useful in the context of animation and Media Studies. In Pozzolini (134), there is the issue of the 'unitary school' which should 'endow the pupils with the fundamental values of 'humanism''. Vague as this is, it is underpinned by a view that perhaps the key way to achieve this is to seek to break down some of the customary *barriers* between certain subject matters. The 'unitary' idea is based on a discursive notion of knowledge



areas (cf. Alvarado and Ferguson). One point that needs to be made here of course, is that 'practice' and 'theory' are not separate 'subjects' - they can perhaps be described more accurately as *different ways of approaching the same subject matter*. They are more akin to different 'framings' in the Bernsteinian sense: i.e. they constitute different ways of transmitting, pedagogically, or (more simply) different ways of teaching.

One of the problems with all this is that, as we can see, the discourse is fine on rhetoric, but perhaps not so strong on actual praxis - i.e. putting the theory of a fairer education system into the practice of actually teaching. This legacy can be seen in the discourse of critical pedagogy - where 'empowerment' is a key term - and it is interesting to think about its proponents' attitude to practical work. Critics of this position (e.g. Buckingham, 1996) are strong on asking for actual concrete examples of what does (or at least might) work in terms of classroom practice. This in many ways is the crux of the matter: it is one thing to outline in abstract terms what needs to be done and the reasons for wanting to do it, but it is entirely another thing to realise this. And the irony here is that I am talking about *putting theory into practice about teaching putting theory into practice*. The key is (as Wayne has stated) to attempt to combine the two, but as Lindahl-Elliott has noted, the aims and objectives of particular modules are not always fully realised, and there are complex reasons for this.

Perhaps a way into clarifying the problem of the practice-theory relationship is to recognise that the notion of 'theory' being 'proper' knowledge, while 'practice' is the 'application' of that knowledge, its concretisation, is only a partial conception. As Mark K. Smith points out, it helps to remember the Aristotelian classification of disciplines as 'theoretical, productive or practical' (Smith, 1999). In other words, there is a distinction between the 'practical' and the 'productive', with the latter associated with craftspeople actually making something, while the former is more to do with the ethical aspects of everyday life, and the so-called 'practical' knowledge regarding specific situations and the actions that one should or should not take. This echoes some of the points earlier about how practice should be seen as sensuous and concrete, as a form of productive labour, and also points to the ways that practice and production can be conflated. (There are plenty of courses that use the two terms interchangeably, or modules called variously 'Media Practice' and 'Media Production', that are doing virtually the same thing). In defining *praxis*, Smith underlines the difference between production and practice. *Praxis*

is not simply action based on reflection. It is action which embodies certain qualities . . . [it is] not merely the doing of something, what . . . Aristotle [describes] as *poiesis*. *Poiesis* is about acting upon, doing to; it is about working with objects. *Praxis*, however, is creative: it is other-seeking and dialogic (ibid.).

Again, this returns us to Fleming's call for practical work that falls into the heuretic tradition: rather than being 'simply' productive (or 'acting upon,

doing to'), the approach he advocates is one of a media praxis, where creativity and development of ideas are central. As such, it is 'other-seeking' (which I understand as meaning it is interested in evolving new ideas, 'going beyond' existing knowledge), and 'dialogic' (which I understand as meaning it engages dynamically and critically with existing forms of textual production).

### **Vocationalism and training**

As Gramsci's categorisation of types of schooling makes clear, it is important to understand the differences between the so-called 'classical' or 'humanist' approach to teaching and learning, and one that favours a 'vocational' or 'training' approach. As Lindahl-Elliott has made clear too, there are some complex underlying reasons for subdivisions within the area known as 'vocational' teaching and learning. Indeed, vocationalism is one of the most contentious concepts in Media, Film and Animation education. The term is a controversial and problematic one in general. I shall now spend some time defining the term and some of the assumptions underpinning its usefulness.

First of all, it has to be said that vocationalism has become something of a term of abuse in some sectors, especially those that equate it with simple 'training'. A vocational course, or one that admits to having a vocational component or philosophy, is therefore criticised as offering nothing more

than simple-minded 'skills' or 'competencies' which enable the learner to gain useful employment. While sympathetic to this response to some extent, it is actually rather unhelpful in clarifying precisely what is being taught and for what purposes. Lindahl-Elliot's work (see above) has outlined some of the complexities of the various orientations towards 'practical' and 'vocational' work, and we would do well to keep his points in mind. Chief amongst these is that even those courses that are disdainful of the vocational still have to *engage* with it if they are dealing with practical work and issues. A simple knee-jerk 'we don't do *that*!' response is not enough. And, as Lindahl-Elliot makes apparent, it might well be the case that some courses *are* actually beholden to the craft mentality they seem to eschew. Certainly, when we turn to consider these issues in direct relation to animation, it will be my contention that this branch of media art is particularly informed by the role of vocationalism in relation to teaching.

So, what is vocationalism? What does it mean to have a vocation? A. C.

Grayling offers this explanation:

Sometimes people choose their occupations, and sometimes they are chosen by them. People used to describe the latter as having a vocation, a notion borrowed from the idea of a summons to the religious life, and applied to medicine and teaching as well as to the life of the mind (*The Guardian*, 11 August 2001).

This emphasises the original use of the term, 'calling', (from the Latin *vocare*) often associated with a divine intervention. It is perhaps easy to see

how such a formulation could be distorted to help shore up socio-economic inequalities (funny how people from higher class backgrounds all found their vocations to be well-paid and prestigious, regardless of their actual talent, or lack of it). Indeed, this remains one of the underlying problems with the idea of vocation and vocational training as a way of equipping oneself for it. To put it bluntly, it is associated with a straightforward utilitarian view of education - here is the job, here is the person who can do that job, here is the training that will enable them to do the job to the best of their abilities. The idea of vocational training and 'solving' the problems of unemployment, for instance, seem inextricably linked. As Andy Green (1983) pointed out in relation to the then-new Youth Training Scheme (YTS) initiative, training schemes apparently dealing in the transmission and acquisition of 'skills' were actually involved in a process of 'deskilling'. Certain 'key' or 'transferable' skills were identified and made central to the rationale of training courses. Added to this was an overriding concern with attitudes and behaviour rather than ability to do the task at hand. The training for semi-skilled and unskilled work therefore consisted less of imparting necessary competencies, or attempting to educate students so that they could aspire to achieving more than an unskilled or semi-skilled job, but attempted to 'cultivate in young people good attitudes, work discipline, and the acceptance of a likely future of low-paid and unskilled work with frequent job changes and intermittent unemployment' (63). It is easy to see why training - and its constant companion, vocationalism - has negative connotations,

when so closely associated with such a reductionist and damaging form of social engineering.

Thus, 'vocational' forms of education can often be reduced to 'mere training', with a view to inserting people into the workforce. In this respect, they can be seen as not so much a 'calling' as a 'telling' - particularly when emphasised by the relationship between vocational courses and 'non-academic' students. The implication is that certain people are not academic, so we had better train them to 'do something useful'. Perhaps this is not in and of itself a problem (though the class-based assumptions about the relative 'worth' of these positions is a problem). However, where we do run into difficulties is when the different concepts of 'vocation', 'training' and 'practice' are used more or less interchangeably. The result of this is that 'practice' does come to be seen as actively 'doing' something, and it is then equated almost exclusively with training someone to do a job. A common result of this is that 'practical' elements of courses can be assumed by students to include 'industry standard' equipment, perhaps a job placement, all the sorts of things that stem from a misconceived notion of what 'practice' is, and the function it is supposed to fulfil. This is not to deny the fact that terms like 'practice', 'training' and 'vocationalism' do have some common ground and overlaps. But we need to be more reflective about exactly *what* they are and *how* they overlap and interact. Certainly, the roles played by 'practical work' and the notion of 'creativity' and 'training' in

relation to animation are crucial. We must now turn to discuss some general issues regarding animation teaching and pedagogy, and explore the ways that practice and theory inter-relate in this area.

### **Animation: theory, practice, and pedagogy**

My earlier discussion of Bernstein's theories and Lindahl-Elliot's application of them to Media courses now needs to be seen in the context of animation teaching and learning. First of all, we need to discuss the extent to which animation can be said to have its own 'disciplinarity', something that was discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Following on from this, we need to ask whether or not it has its own pedagogic procedures that distinguish it from other areas such as Media, Film or Cultural Studies. Is it 'framed' and 'classified' in such a way that it can be said to have its own 'pedagogic discourse'? What is the relationship between theory and practice in the realm of animation? Are the two easily combined, or are they subject to some of the same problems identified by Lindahl-Elliot in relation to Media courses? Does animation have the same problematic relationship to vocationalism and the world of work?

Analysis of feedback from questionnaires, as well as my interaction with the various discussion groups of which I am a member (see Chapter 8) suggest a range of approaches to teaching animation. This is of course unsurprising because of the range of contexts in which animation was being

taught, and also the diversity in how animation was actually being defined. In this respect, we have to grapple with the same questions and issues that we see in the debates about Media Education in general, but inflected by the very specific demands of animation. Having said this, there are some key areas where this 'specificity' can be said to be less than stable: that is, if we can argue that the differences between 'live action' and 'animated' media are, on some levels at least, becoming less and less pronounced, then it is difficult to maintain that the specificities of teaching can and should be maintained. There are some very interesting shifts occurring at the interface between live action and animated modes of representation - as inflected by the 'digital turn' I discussed in Chapter 3 - and these are potentially changing the ways that teaching either field might be approached. It is also the case that the two fields have always existed in a state of 'interface' or flux: we therefore need to offer some historical analysis. Certainly, one needs to engage with notions of practice and theory, and the idea of vocationalism, in order to fully understand how animation functions as a part of any curriculum.

There are several very different manifestations of 'animation teaching', each with their own rationale and objectives. Firstly, there are those courses that aim to train people how to animate, with a view to obtaining work as animators. Clearly, the range of contexts in which one could do animated work is vast (from adverts to CGI special effects, to the internet, to



'conventional' types of entertainment animation such as cartoons), so there are a large number of variations within this particular manifestation, but the underlying rationale is that in order to animate, one has to learn a specific set of (practical) skills. In this respect, this orientation seems to fall very clearly into Lindahl-Elliot's category of 'market-oriented vocational' courses. However, many animation courses are underpinned by what he would recognise as a 'critical-vocational' discourse: those courses that ground their students in the 'experimental' and more 'authorial' dimension of animation production. There is a pronounced tension here between these two orientations. The tension derives from the perceived levels of instrumentalism attached to these two positions. On the one hand, those courses that simply train people 'how to' animate, with a view to carrying out particular tasks in the industry; on the other hand, those courses that attempt to instil some level of critique and formal experimentation.

In actual fact, most courses that would describe themselves as 'vocational' on some level, recognise that *simply* engaging in practice - without *any* theoretical-critical reflection - is not a realistic way of producing decent practitioners in a chosen field. Even the most forthright exponents of vocationalism do not dispense entirely with theory, criticism and history. This really just underlines the fact that there is more to terms such as 'practice' (which should not be reduced to so-called 'practical' work or skills) and 'vocationalism' (where it is just as likely that one is valued as a part of

the workforce for one's learned grasp of theoretical issues, and applied knowledge, as one is for ability to simply carry out a task - indeed, the doing of something is informed by one's grasp of theoretical 'possibilities') than is commonly understood.

There are also those courses that approach animation as part of moving image culture as a whole and attempt to contextualise it in relation to other forms - such as film, video, photography, or art and design, or computing. These approaches can be characterised by a reliance on theory and history rather than relying on 'practical' concerns. For example Jason Mittel's course, taught at Georgia State University in 1999 (*Film Genres: Animated Film & Television*; 'A3: Mittel' in the Appendix) is a good example of a course of study that looks to contextualise (certain kinds of) animation in relation to broader cultural and institutional theories and histories. The teaching is based around a series of case studies and 'reader response' papers written by the students; the emphasis is on historical and theoretical reflection on particular moments of animation. In this sense, such a course is taking animation as the 'subject matter' of a broadly 'cultural studies' project, exploring animation, as the title of the course suggests, as a 'film genre'. This is not to suggest, of course, that Mittel takes animation as a straightforward 'genre' (indeed his work more generally looks at genres and typologies in relation to television, see Mittel, 2001), but it is to say that the 'starting point' for the analysis, and therefore the way in which the debates

are initially 'framed' is in relation to film (and television).

In this respect, animation could be part of a range of material that is studied, one form of expression among many. Indeed, animation can be seen as the *meeting point* of a number of other activities, or subjects, such as film, photography, art and design, sculpture, puppetry, mime and other performing arts, as well as the pen-skills associated with drawing. Clearly, courses that engage with animation's 'multiplicity' can (and do) offer practical work as a way of exploring and expressing certain ideas. However, this practical work must be 'grounded' by some theoretical-historical reflection, otherwise students will simply be ticking off particular techniques as they do them, rather than learning the strengths, weaknesses and contingencies of different ways of animating. In this respect, they should be looking to develop an animation praxis, rather than just actualising theoretical issues through practical work or, indeed, simply acquiring skills.

This can be seen in a number of the course documents in the Appendix. The undergraduate course at University of Wales College, Newport (UWCN) is a case in point (see 'A4.1 – A4.4 Newport'). Although this animation course is clearly identified as one that teaches people 'how to' animate, there is an equally clear emphasis on critical vocabulary. The Aims and Objectives state 'The course is as much about developing an understanding of animation as a film art, as it is about teaching specific

animation technique', with the assumption being that the practice and the theory somehow inform one another. In this sense, we could locate this course as falling broadly within the first and second of the categories identified by Buckingham (above). That is, the practice can be seen as a form of 'artistic expression' and it can also be seen as something to be learned in its own right. Or, put another way, the practice can be seen as a means to an end or as the end itself. But, the important thing is that there is recognition here that the practice and the theory are dialectically linked rather than separate. This can be traced further in the Newport documentation, for instance in the various 'reports' that students have to write reflecting on their numerous practical assignments:

Write a 1000 word report/essay, which details and analyses a critical evaluation of your self-reflexive film. This may include a formal theoretical connection between your initial research and the final outcomes. In other words, it could form the beginnings of a theoretical foundation around which you may want to build upon as part of your dissertation proposal (see Moving Image Subject assignments).

Here, links are made not only between practice and theory, but also between different elements of the degree, with the clear suggestion that a short practical piece of animation *can* form the basis for theoretical reflection and, indeed, one's dissertation. Much the same kind of rationale was seen in the Royal College of Art example, discussed in Chapter 5.

Many of the issues raised here have been addressed by animation practitioners and teachers. One particularly useful summary was offered

recently by Maureen Furniss, founder and editor of Animation Journal, and currently Professor of Animation at Savannah College of Art and Design. Having taught animation in a wide variety of contexts - 'animation production departments, live-action centered film and television departments, and art departments with or without animation specializations . . . [in] community colleges, art colleges, and more broadly focused universities' (Furniss, 2001) - she has experienced at first hand the heterogeneous nature of animation. It is this heterogeneity that makes animation so vibrant and exciting, but it also leads to some problems in defining and focusing at the course level.

One thing seems certain though. 'Animation', however defined, is already conceptualised as a 'specialism' - that is, it is a very particular (and in the eyes of many, or in lay terms, subsidiary) form of audio-visual expression. If someone is studying animation there is an overwhelming sense that what they are doing is practically oriented in some way. Certainly there are issues about the different kinds of practice, different techniques and different reasons for learning how to animate. But that is the crux: these courses are basically teaching people 'how to' animate. There is simply not the same level of expectation of practice in Film and Media courses. A Film Studies or Media Studies course *may well include* practice -whether video, multimedia, photography or, indeed, animation - and lots do (to some extent). Also, some students (though the actual numbers are overestimated,

I feel) embark on these courses with an eye on a job 'in the media' or 'in the industry' when they finish. Having said this though, there are a significant proportion of Film and Media students who see studying their chosen area as a route through some of the key critical debates, rather than as a calling card for future employment. I would suggest, then, that asking a Film Studies student 'So, you want to be a director, then?', as I was asked a number of times when an undergraduate, is more likely to get a negative answer than a positive. Whereas, most people studying on an animation course, if asked whether they want to be an animator, will reply 'Yes, of course!' It is less a case of finding out whether they want to be an animator, but working out precisely what kind of animation, or what role in the business of animating, they wish to play. I am not suggesting that someone who studies on an animation course is somehow incapable of working in a job that is only marginally related to animation. But it is the case that Media Studies students, far from not being trained to do anything, usually receive a broad-based intellectual training, which (probably much to the chagrin of someone like Chris Woodhead) makes them ideally suited to a wide range of jobs. Someone who does an animation course has trained in a specific specialism - the links between animation courses and the world of work are that much more pronounced and developed than they are in the case of Media or Film Studies. Even with the Newport course discussed above, which obviously values critical reflection as part of its pedagogy, every student on the course will be learning 'how to' animate; there are a

multitude of ways of learning how to do this, but being on the course effectively means one wants to be an animator.

Obviously there are those Film-related courses that *do* have explicit links to the industry (for example the National Film and Television School courses, or those at the Royal College of Art), or are that much more vocationally-inflected. These are usually distinguished from plain old Film Studies or Media Studies by their trumpeting of 'Production' or 'Practice' as part of the course title. As Lindahl-Elliott has made clear, there is an understood distinction between those courses that offer 'Media Studies' and those that offer 'Media Production' (and his work explores the issues about those courses that attempt to integrate the two). My main point here is that there seems to be something inherently more production/practice oriented about 'animation' than there is about 'film' or 'the media'.

This point is borne out by Furniss's concentration on practical considerations in her address, which was entitled 'Challenges in Teaching Animation Studies'. To my mind, and as noted above, Film Studies or Media Studies courses might well include some practical work, but I think the assumption would be that such work would be a *component* on the course rather than the main thing. In Animation Studies there seems to be an inversion of this, so that practical work is the main content or focus, and this may or may not be backed up with some historical and theoretical reflection.

Thus:

[it is now] more difficult than ever to identify just what kind of 'animation' we should teach and how we should teach it. Do we prepare students for work in theatrical features? Television production? The Internet? Games? Special effects for live-action films? (Furniss, 2001).

The clear assumption here is that anyone studying animation (i.e. doing 'Animation Studies') is looking for preparation for work in the animation industry, and the dilemma is working out the best approach to providing that preparation. She continues:

When designing the curriculum, another consideration is whether we will take a traditional art approach, including fundamentals of art history, life drawing, and other forms of art production, or if the bulk of courses [i.e. 'modules' or 'units'] a student takes should relate to new technologies in their various forms (ibid.).

Here again, the stress is very much on the notion of 'study' as a practical 'doing'. This might well be backed up by some historical and theoretical work, but it will be seen as a means to that end - that is, providing a more detailed understanding of the practice. Later on in the address, Furniss points directly to the main reason for this apparent subordination, and it is worth quoting at length:

The study of animation history and aesthetics within a production program is directly related to the breadth of education a student receives. As history and aesthetics courses generally do not translate into 'job related skills' they may have a low priority in industry-oriented programs. . . . there is no real 'standard' of historical knowledge required of animation professionals; no studio that I know of gives an entrance exam, asking who Winsor McCay is. . . . Within animation programs, the bulk of viewing a student does very well may be in the context of



production-related courses, when a teacher wants to illustrate a method being taught; it may or may not be accompanied by a discussion of historical context. Given this situation, do instructors emphasize examples that depict a variety of forms of expression? To what extent are issues of representation and responsibility, or other subjective topics related to violence, sexuality, cultural context, and artistic merit used as a means of evaluation or even discussed in production-oriented courses? We need to consider how a sense of history and critical skills enable students to better adapt to a changing marketplace, to position themselves as versatile artists who can evaluate and work within the style and needs of whatever animation company has openings at any given time or to work as independent artists . . . (ibid.).

Again, even though there is recognition of the potential complexity of issues that can be broached in relation to animation, it is also clearly noted that often these issues are disregarded. Even when they are not, the critical contextualisation of animation is implicitly there to make better ('versatile') practitioners.

Now, some people would ask why this is a problem, possibly adding that, if students want to study animation as an historical/theoretical/critical object or field, then there are plenty of courses where they can undertake such study. The thing is, those courses [what a US-based educator like Furniss would call 'programs'] are generally Film, Media, and Cultural Studies courses. The end result is that the academic study of animation becomes severed from the practical/production side of things, where the two should be actively integrated. Although I am not advocating the complete separation of Film, Media, and Animation courses, there is a problem of specificity involved here, where certain approaches to a subject

area are seen as appropriate to one discipline, and other approaches are seen as appropriate to another. That is, the Animation Studies courses will teach people how to animate (in all its diversity, admittedly), while the theoretical reflection on animation as a form of cultural production is more likely to be carried out in Film and Media departments.

This issue of specificity, and the 'appropriateness' of particular methods of study, is central to the development and understanding of how disciplines emerge and maintain themselves. This is especially important in knowledge areas that can be described as 'hybrid', or seen as developing out of an interaction between other knowledge areas. Geraghty and Lusted point to this phenomenon in relation to Television Studies' development as a discipline, and the impact it has on the methodological frameworks that are deemed appropriate to the study of television (Geraghty and Lusted, 1998). The same sort of thing needs to be done for animation, as it displays a similar tendency to Television Studies, being a 'new' discipline that clearly borrows from and synthesises from more established disciplines. In the case of Television Studies, the main paradigms were Social Sciences (institutional, ethnographic) which were combined and interacted with other methodological approaches (textual and generic analyses for instance), to the extent that now its teachers and practitioners can point to something they can call 'Television Studies'. There is a similar problem here as the one I am alluding to in relation to 'Animation Studies' though. I would suggest

that the vast majority of those degree courses that say they are specifically dealing with television as a cultural phenomenon either do so as part of a 'combination' - that is, the Television Studies is done within a Film and Television Studies framework (Brunel is an example of this), or as part of Media Studies. How we define and understand Television Studies and Animation Studies is therefore down to how we conceptualise their relationships to other, related knowledge areas.

The social position of television has unsurprisingly led to aspects of Social Science being adapted for its study. In a similar fashion, it is unsurprising that Animation Studies owes much to Art and Design paradigms and pedagogies. Here we need to distinguish between the *potential* ways of looking at something and those that constitute the *norm*. It is certainly possible to discuss and teach about TV from an aesthetic perspective that pays little attention to institutional factors (though many people would take issue with the efficacy of such an approach). Similarly, it is surely possible to teach about animation by exploring the historical and theoretical aspects and not paying much attention to the aesthetics or practicalities. Again, some would take serious issue with such an approach, but my point would be that it teaches 'animation', but that we need to recognise that what is being taught can be variously defined and constituted.

The problem with Animation Studies being too 'indebted' to Art and Design is that it becomes hidebound by this, and certain interesting avenues might be closed off. Nick Phillips, the Course Director of the Animation and Illustration degree scheme at Southampton Institute, points to some of the difficulties with Animation's relationship with Art and Design. He was asked to consider the disciplinary position of animation as a subject, and how it relates to its near neighbours:

Now, the problem with associating with some of these other adjacent disciplines, or within those disciplines . . . Art and Design, it's certainly within Art, I think it's in Art, whether it's in Design is another matter. Design is about client and a client interface, with a commercial product, for various reasons, whether its a piece of product design, a piece of fashion design, a piece of graphic design, whatever. Now, do we, are we really interested in that sort of interface, that sort of design interface? If we're not, if we're doubtful about that at all, then we need to look outside of Design, we need to look at Performing Arts, we need to look at reading the screen in Film Studies, we might need to look at History to a certain extent, to unpick narrative . . . what recurring themes come up over and over again? So these are the sorts of broad, back-of-the-envelope scribbles about where animation fits with other disciplines (Phillips, 2001).

So, the problem with associating animation too closely with certain other disciplines means that it will methodologically 'straitjacket' how things can be done. As Phillips makes evident, there are some serious problems with linking too closely with Design, in the sense that the course might not be quite so 'product-driven' as Design courses seem to suggest. However, it is equally clear that 'Art' is less of an issue: there is still the assumption that in order to be 'doing' animation, one has to have certain 'artistic' abilities or skills. While recognising that not all people who go on to display skill as

animators have to *necessarily* be good at drawing, Phillips certainly seems to think that it is something that is an advantage. It seems there are certain fundamental principles that do help one to understand how animation actually works. So, when he turns to explain the structure of the SI course:

[In the] first semester of 12 weeks - the students do drawing, a 20 credit drawing unit. [They also do a] 20 credit critical understanding - through practice - that's a studio unit - animation . . . and then another unit on the principles of animation. So [in] the first 12 weeks we don't write a single sentence! We're drawing. Drawing, drawing, drawing -for the first 12 weeks (ibid.).

He continues:

[In the] second semester - let's look at it as an aesthetic . . . now that aesthetic will come . . . from their own emotional background, thinking, their own experimentation with an aesthetic - so they do printmaking . . . some may not be the greatest figurative drawers in the world, but through transforming an image, a drawn image, through printmaking . . . the scales fall from eyes then, and - oh yeah - I can say things without being figurative, perfectly figurative (ibid.).

The key here then is that engaging in practice is seen as a way to better understanding how the chosen field works. Also, we have some sense of Fleming's heuritic process, in that the students' own position as a practitioner - i.e. someone engaged in *praxis* rather than simply *producing* along some pre-empted lines - is emphasised: the way they deal with the aesthetic issues stems from their own background and 'experimentation'. Again, this term need not mean the 'formalism' of a 'theoreticist' position, where theoretical concepts are actualised through practical work. It can mean, as I think it does here, a way of using animation's practical and

productive potential to develop a way of expressing oneself. And, although one might well be working within a certain strand of animation practice (e.g. 3D, puppets, hand-drawn, computer), there are simply many more potential avenues within each of these strands, than are open to students working with film or video.

## **Conclusion**

As stated at the start of this chapter, the relationship between practice and theory is of central importance in teaching and learning about the Media, and it is my contention that this particular relationship requires special attention if we are to understand how animation is variously taught and learned. More work needs to be done to explore the differences between 'production' and 'practice' discourses, and how these relate to 'theoretical' discourse. It is evident that there is a more pronounced link between animation courses and definite 'job outcomes', and this is linked to the fact that animation as a subject area is viewed as a 'specialism', where practitioners learn the relevant skills to 'do the job'. However, it is equally true that a highly developed skills discourse like this can lead to a situation where some courses deal with the practical issues, leaving the theoretical and analytical dimension to 'other' courses. This is a problem, as it moves away from a truly dialectical, integrated idea of teaching animation. The notion of theory and practice informing each other, but being in some respects in conflict, contradicting each other, is a powerful idea, and

ultimately gives us a model of teaching and learning that is built on an idea of dynamic process. In the final chapters of this thesis, I will move on to examine these issues in relation to the idea of Animation as a community, where individuals and groups work through some of the contradictions and tensions traced in this and earlier chapters.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Methodological issues and the status of evidence**

In this chapter I will reflect on some of the problems arising from the collection of data and evidence in relation to the thesis as a whole. It is worth stressing here that this research project is not a large-scale empirical undertaking. The main reason for this is that the field of Animation Studies, its nascent position and contested nature, is still emerging, still in the process of becoming. Therefore, much of this project is informed theorisation rather than 'proof'. Although the conclusions we can draw from this project are tentative and incomplete, this is in the nature of a project looking at a 'new' discipline. It is also important to recognise that the interactions between researcher and researched (i.e. between me and other scholars/teachers working in the field of Animation Studies) are a crucial part of the interpretive framework of the research. Thus, the interview, questionnaire and other exchanges that form the evidence for my observations must be seen as an evolving, essentially discursive body of material.

I will firstly make some comments about how the methodology employed emerged, using a combination of email discussion groups, email questionnaires and interviews. The evolving nature of this methodology is very much in keeping with the status of Animation as a knowledge area: its practitioners and educators are still in the process of feeling their way, so it



is no surprise that one's methodology reflects this. Aside, then, from the specific points to be made about how online/email communication impacts upon Animation, there are some more general points to be made about online communication – for example, whether it 'democratises' certain forms of communication or not, the advantages and disadvantages of how it changes the temporal-spatial relations inherent in interviews, and so on. These are all important questions, and need to be addressed to some extent in any research that uses online/computer-mediated communication. Reflecting on these questions is therefore an essential part of the research procedure. Much of this reflection will be carried out in the final chapters of the thesis, looking at Animation as a community and trying to construct a typology of Animation.

This chapter will talk about the size and nature of the group of respondents, the characteristics of what they say and the format in which they say it, and make some general comments about how one might draw conclusions from such material. The methodological advantages and disadvantages of using interviews and related qualitative materials (such as email discussion group posts) will also be assessed. One of the main arguments will be to state clearly that my role as a researcher is an *active* one, implicated in the work I am doing. This is not least because I consider myself to be working with in the field of Animation Studies, such as it is. My position within this field is as much up for scrutiny as anyone else's though,

and this is demonstrated in the reflexive evaluation of the material: how one *interacts with* those around one, and the material contexts in which one operates, are vital elements of the discussion. These notions of how social actors *interact* with one another (and the wider social groupings of which they are part) to (re)produce meanings, have been discussed by Giddens (1984), Mead (1972) and Schutz (1974), amongst others; again, these are issues that will be returned to in greater detail later in the thesis. I should also reiterate therefore that the ideas of social constructionism are central to my thesis, and I shall be interpreting the online 'data' I have gathered broadly within this theoretical framework. The actual email and online data appears in other chapters (mainly Chapters 8 and 9), and the examples of course outlines are in the Appendix. The course outlines are referred to in various chapters (mainly Chapter 6).

Methodologically speaking, this research uses what can be termed a materialist hermeneutics to interpret and analyse what social actors in specific situations actually do. Materialist hermeneutics has been applied in literary and textual studies to explore the processes involved in the construction of a particular text's meanings across a range of socio-historical conjunctures. Texts will never have 'fixed' meanings, but will represent the 'working through' of a series of relations between artefacts, institutions, and people. What something might mean at any particular time

and place is therefore dependent on the interpretive frameworks of specific people, and their interaction with their material context. As McGann states:

‘the meaning of the texts’ will appear as a set of concrete and always changing conditions: because the meaning is in the use, and textuality is a social condition of various times, places, and persons (quoted in Kooistra, 2002: 14).

This is useful in relation to this research because it gives us a framework in which we can discuss the multifaceted ‘meaning’ of animation without collapsing into a debilitating relativism, where ‘animation’ simply means what anyone wants it to mean. Although a materialist hermeneutic approach does foreground the ways in which *different* interpretations are generated, it does so by concentrating on the discursive and the relational. In other words, it does what I have proposed and outlined in Chapter 5, where I argued that we can only understand animation as a ‘discipline’ if we recognize its close relationships with other knowledge areas. In particular, as I am going to move on to do in Chapters 8 and 9, we need to pay attention to the ways in which individuals and groups actively interpret their role and position in relation to animation. *My* interpretation of *their* interpretation of what animation is (and is not), how it relates to other knowledge areas, and so on, forms a web in which we must locate individual instances of practice. In this respect, the people I have spoken to offer very important ‘diagnostic’ signposts, and it is only through what they say, how they ‘construct’ animation as a field, that we can draw some conclusions about animation’s status as a form of knowledge.

### **The gathering and extent of the data**

The evidence drawn upon in subsequent chapters is collected from my *personal interaction* with animation teachers and scholars, predominantly via an online community related to the Animation Journal email discussion group (see: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/animationjournal/messages>). This has a number of implications, which are discussed below. The group exists to discuss any and all animation-related topics; as this research should underline, that is a vast and diverse area. In terms of the population of this group, it has 534 members (as of 29 October 2003), ranging from practitioners to teachers to animation fans. Not all of these are 'active' members in the sense that they contribute a lot (if at all); there are many members who simply use the list as something to 'observe', hardly ever making contributions themselves. There are other members, of course, who contribute regularly.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, the data that I use is not an across-the-board set of feedback that includes every member. It is *self-selecting* in the sense that those people who have made interesting comments, or offered some points for debate that are relevant, are the ones that I have drawn into the discussion and followed up with questionnaire and interview. In a similar way, my posts to the entire membership of the group asking certain questions elicited responses from only certain members of the group. (And, my direct emails to specific people have not all received responses). There

are problems with this of course, and the relatively very small number of core respondents might skew any observations made. However, this is a problem faced by all research of this kind; it is simply that in this particular research, these issues are both more pronounced and, somewhat paradoxically, less important. 'More pronounced' because the relative smallness of the group is in many respects *part of* what is being explored; 'less important' because the main purpose of this research is not to define and delimit everything that animation and its practitioners may or may not be, but is rather more interested in the *processes* by which practitioners and educators come to the conclusions they do.

In this respect, the points made should be seen as 'markers' in this new terrain, which can be analysed in terms of their *discursive* aspects. This is something that comes up again later: the notion that people working in an area will actively contribute to *constructing* it by the way they interact with their peers. Thus, the sample group (as represented by the responses either drawn from the group archives, or from particular email responses directly sent to me) though small, offers a perfectly analysable set of responses. The important thing is to recognise the limitations of the size of the group and not make huge, unreflexive generalisations from any data, but at the same time to recognise that the comments and feedback made by members of groups such as this (whether their comment is directly to a specific question, as part of an interview, or as part of the general

‘discussion’ that these groups are set up for) are vitally important for understanding what they think and do. It is worth noting that the comments made in discussion groups such as the Animation Journal one are indicative of people’s views and opinions in a day-to-day way (i.e. they are not responses that have been ‘filtered’ through an interview procedure), and as such, they can be viewed as useful data. It is certainly the case that people will respond differently if they feel that their responses are being monitored, collated and analysed (this is *not* to imply that such an awareness invalidates any responses – it simply means we have to be aware, as researchers, that it is going on). So, it is useful to be able to have a range of different data to call upon – the spontaneous posts, the more considered ‘responses’, the perhaps even more ‘filtered’ answers to an email interview question.

There is an off-shoot group from the general Animation Journal group – ‘animedu’, specifically concerned with discussions around animation and education in all its manifestations (see: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/animedu/>). All members of this group are members of the general group, but the animedu group was set up in order to localise discussion relating to this specific area. This group has 53 members (as of 29 October 2003). This group (or some members of it, at least) have engaged in email discussion with me (and each other) about issues relating to Animation Studies and

Animation Education. There has also been a circulation of animation course syllabi (see Appendix to the main thesis for examples of these).

My initial approach was to the main Animation Journal list in April 1999 (at this point the 'animedu' list did not exist), asking for feedback on certain questions concerned with animation as an object of study, as a discipline etc. This was followed up by other email posts and the forwarding of a short questionnaire to the whole group in January 2001. This elicited 14 responses, and the data gathered from this set of responses are laid out and analysed in Chapter 8. The most important thing here is to note that, while points made in the responses were of intrinsic interest, it is the ongoingly *discursive* nature of what is being said, the build-up of discussion points, that has shaped the research. That is, participants who responded to the questionnaire have then been contacted regarding something they said, and this has led to further email-based discussion and interview. There have also been debates and discussions relevant to my research conducted as a matter of course by members of the various groups. In many respects it is the ongoing, open-ended aspects of this form of communication – initial communication, followed by response, counter-response, further questioning, and so on, over the course of a number of years – that make it such an interesting format for research. It emphasises the discursive and developmental aspects of Animation as a field.

There is a wide range of types of interview with varying levels of formality, 'structuredness', and so on. The issues addressed in my research methodology are those that examine and actively reflect upon the interviewees' (and the interviewer's) position as social actors, and the way that they communicate with each other, me as interviewer, and the broader communities of which they are part. Indeed, although some of the communication that I had with respondents can be termed 'interview', it is also the case that much of the 'data' that I gathered was drawn from general discussion group posts, as well as direct emails to and from me. Even in the case of email which I self-consciously labelled 'interview' (as in 'Here are some questions for you to answer . . . '), my approach was very relaxed and open-ended. This was a deliberate move, to elicit as much discursive response as I could. As noted already, the nature of the email exchange is such that it allows a different order of discourse (due to the temporal shift, for instance, where respondents can draft and redraft responses over a matter of days if they so wish, go back and add further response at a later date).

Some critiques of qualitative research in general and interview-based research in particular point to how 'subjective' the findings are (or, how 'subjective' are the data from which the findings are drawn, which might well amount to the same thing). For example, Kvale (1996: 284-9) maps out 'Ten Standard Reactions to Qualitative Interviews'. Framed as points that



follow the statement 'The qualitative research interview is *not*.' the Ten Reactions include:

1. scientific, but only reflects common sense
  2. objective, but subjective
  3. trustworthy, but biased
  4. reliable, it rests on leading questions
  - ...
  9. generalizable, there are too few subjects
  10. valid, it relies on subjective impressions
- (ibid: 284)

All of these reactions are debatable, especially in this particular research project. One of the main factors being investigated is the very 'subjectivity' and 'intersubjectivity' that is explicitly seen as a problem here. Indeed, the notion of what constitutes 'common sense' for a particular group of people, and how this might, in turn, help or hinder them in 'recognising' what someone else is doing, is of key interest. The notion of generalizability is also problematic when talking about this research: as already noted, a small sample can offer an interesting set of responses, and these can be analysed, in and of themselves, as an interesting set of data, revealing particular debates and trends. This is the nature of qualitative research – a survey of every single person engaged in animation teaching might have its uses (if one were actually able to carry it out), but one would be investigating different things, or different aspects of the things that are under scrutiny here. The reflective, intersubjective stance taken by this research circumvents these problems. In this sense, the research is

‘person-dependent’, ‘explorative’, and ‘relies on subjective impressions’ – and it is all the stronger for it. I would argue that this is the only way we can uncover the really interesting foundations of how Animation Studies is emerging.

### **Issues pertaining to (email) interviews as data**

Relying on what people say about what they do as a form of evidence is of course open to question. Clearly there are issues of online identity (is someone who they say they are?) that are only beginning to be grappled with. These are less of a concern to me specifically, as the people I am talking about are able to be verified, they hold positions that require them to be identifiable and so on, so the questions that arise in some research projects that use online data (e.g. is that 14-year-old female fan of TaTu *really* a 14 year-old . . .?) are not really applicable here. There are issues on a more general methodological and social level however, to do with human agency and the actual ability of people to interact with and shape the world they live and work in. This point is central to my argument in Chapter 1, and is returned to in subsequent chapters, where the interaction of individuals with the real material institutions and sets of practices in which they are embedded is seen as a crucial part of how those practices and institutions work and develop. Of course (individual, but more crucially, groups of) people can make a difference; they are not simply automatons who ‘reproduce’ culture. On the other hand though, the power of human agency

is of course constrained by institutional and ideological factors (I cannot simply set up and run a course of my choosing at Brunel University – it needs to go through procedures, may be rejected as not cost effective, or whatever). So, the best route through all of this is to recognise that *what* people do is important, but that their understanding of *how* and *why* (and, of course, *where*) they do it is equally vital. Asking them to reflect on what they do is part of the process, but these comments are only really of any use if they are fully contextualised.

In his discussion of European cinema, Mike Wayne (2002) constructs a case study of a particular film by interviewing the director and producer, asking them to reflect on the film's production process. As he says:

This raises questions of authorship, motivations and agency and the status we give to the self-reflections of those involved in the very processes which we seek to understand (15).

In other words, the data that these interviews generated are not taken as 'self-evident', but neither are they seen as simple musings. As Wayne goes on to point out, there can be a danger with these sorts of data, in that it can lead the unreflexive researcher to the most 'individualist' of conclusions, perhaps suggesting that authorial intention is the key to the 'meaning' of a film. This is, of course, naïve in the extreme. Yet to neglect such data because of this potential problem is also an oversight, as they can provide

the researcher with a mine of information that would otherwise not be available. So,

The way to handle such empirical data it seems to me is to try and integrate motivations, agency, and individual perspectives into the wider institutional structures and cultural dynamics in operation, using these objective phenomena (i.e. existing independent of our will) as a way of assessing the weight, merit and contradictions of the empirical evidence gathered by interview. As John Tulloch notes, cultural producers, like all human subjects, must be accredited with some sense of agency. They do not simply, unconsciously conform to their given structures and uncritically reproduce their cultures. To varying degrees, 'authors' (producers and directors, just like academics) can "reflexively monitor their conduct, and are partially aware of the conditions of their behaviour" (Wayne, 2002: 16).

This is what I would suggest is going on with the empirical evidence I have gathered. It represents a(n admittedly small) set of people who themselves are reflecting on their institutional positions, and their role as cultural producers and educators. And my interpretation of what they say is also reflecting on the institutional and material conditions in which they are working. With such a framework in place it is difficult to see why the evidence could be seen as anything other than what it is – a solid bedrock of informed opinion. There are issues relating to interpretation that perhaps need to be addressed – the double hermeneutic is at work here, with my interpreting of someone else's interpretation of what they do, clearly at the forefront. As I say though, these issues do not invalidate the research methodology or the evidence gathered; indeed, they are a crucial part of it.

The key features of conducting survey/questionnaire/interview research via email/the internet are: the temporal and spatial dimensions; questions of non-verbal communication; the relative ease of transcription; issues of confidentiality and anonymity. I shall talk briefly about each of these in turn.

### Temporal and spatial aspects of CMC

In a conventional face-to-face interview scenario, the participants obviously need to be in close proximity, and all communication is subject to the social mediation that occurs as a consequence of this. With email interview, these 'constraints' (the qualification is to signify that they may not be *entirely* negative) are lifted. The interviewer can ask questions via one email, and the interviewee can respond in as much or as little detail as s/he wishes, virtually instantaneously or at a much later date. Needless to say, this sort of communication can take place across vast geographical distances (or, interestingly, people who *are* actually in close proximity can use this method), and has the advantage therefore of potentially widening any sample in cultural terms. (This last point clearly needs to be tempered by the observation that a college professor in Canada or the USA perhaps has more in common with a lecturer in the UK than the last of these probably has with certain other people from the UK. The term 'cultural' must not simply be equated with an idea of 'national', though this is often the case. As the research suggests, the notion of academic communities (or

cultures) is one that requires us to think outside of simplistic models of how things might fit together.)

Another key thing worth noting about the methodology employed is that it is in many respects an extreme form of 'open-ended' interview. The open-ended interview is one that takes the form of a relaxed and semi-structured discussion, where the qualitative data gathered is viewed as important often because of the relaxed way in which it is gathered. By using the email format, it is easy enough to ask questions and for respondents to answer in as much or as little detail as they wish. These responses can, in turn, be responded to, supplementary questions posed, and so forth. In this respect, the CMC format, with all its ability to transcend the temporal and spatial 'limitations' of conventional face to face interviews, can be seen as a logical and very useful extension of the open-ended/semi-structured interview. There is a sense, for example, that an email interview is never 'completed', or at least, does not have the same sense of 'closure' that more conventional interview methods might have. The supplemental follow-up, months down the line, the clarification of an ambiguity in a subsequent email – these are all potentially very useful features of this sort of research. Particularly notable is the way that such an ongoing, *discursive* interview technique reflects other aspects of my argument: the discursive nature of academic communities in general; the ongoing and emerging nature of Animation Studies as a discipline in particular.

### Issues of nonverbal communication

Some commentators note that the differences between face to face and email interviews are the obvious 'democratisation', in the sense that issues of race, gender and other potentially 'hierarchical' phenomena are lessened (see Boshier, 1990). The flipside of this is that a variety of nonverbal cues are also lessened or lost entirely. Pauses, hesitations, overlaps and the like are all vital parts of the act of communication, and they are absent from email interviews. There are various conventions that have emerged to try and represent these speech acts (emoticons, use of capitalisation, etc). But the fact is, one needs to recognise the specificity of email as a form of language, and work this into one's analysis. (See Baron, 2000 for a comparative analysis of how email and more conventional forms of communication have evolved and co-exist; see Baym, 1995 for discussion of how non-verbal cues might be developed in CMC/online communities).

### Transcription of data and anonymity of respondents

The final points are to do with ease of transcription and the anonymity of participants. The latter of these is not really an issue for this research, as the anonymity of respondents to me is not a problem (I am of course aware that they might wish some of their points to be anonymous if presented in the research itself, but this is a different order of anonymity). Ease of transcription is definitely an advantage, with responses automatically presented in a 'user-friendly' format, highly amenable to manipulation via a

standard word-processing package, or, in the case of larger-scale amounts of data, a qualitative analysis computer programme. It should be noted though (or 'reiterated', as I will have talked about size of sample etc above) that the data gathered for this project is on a relatively very small scale, but these issues are not to be underestimated.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has mapped out some of the methodological issues and problems that arise when dealing with qualitative research that uses interviews. In particular, it has addressed the ways that these debates have been recast by the emergence and wider use of computer-mediated communication, such as email. There are potential problems with how one carries out interviews and surveys via email, but my contention has been that the advantages are many, and all that is required is a reflexive stance that recognises the issues and does not take data at face value. My drawing upon a range of inter-related material, all linked to the Animation Journal email discussion group and its off-shoots, suggests that one can use email posts, more structured (but nevertheless 'open-ended') interview/questioning type emails, and other similar material, and by so doing, allow oneself access to a rich body of data that might not come across using other more traditional methods. Aside from these qualitative points, it is also admissible for this research to draw upon a relatively small sample of respondents. As outlined above, there are very good reasons for



the size of the community that I am working with(in), and the research makes a point of talking through these issues of community and how it impacts on an academic grouping who are still in the process of 'becoming'. The final point to reiterate here is that the actual commentary and findings appear in subsequent chapters, which deal with debates around animation as a community (Chapter 8), and a final chapter that constructs a tentative typology of animation-related scholars and workers.

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<sup>1</sup> As McLaughlin et al (1995) point out, the disparity between such 'silent' members of a group and that part (minority) that *do* say something via posts raises the issue of how we might define the resulting 'community'. In other words, "The question then arises as to the authenticity of community fostered by mass consumption of dialogue produced by a relative few. Silent readers may feel that they are a part of the conversation; however, this vicarious participation raises the spectre of pseudocommunity" (92). As other commentators have pointed out (e.g. Beniger (1987), cited by McLaughlin et al), this shift away from interpersonal communication to 'impersonal associations integrated by mass means' has meant a radical shift in how we must view (certain) communities. In the academic world, with its reliance on CMC, such a point has added resonance; the question of pseudocommunity needs addressing in relation to disciplinary behaviours. McLaughlin et al go on to point out that the online adoption of 'personae' raises questions as to how much the thoughts and actions of participants of an online usenet group might reflect their *actual* state of mind or point of view (as well as raising issues of whether they are who they say they are). This is less of an issue with the groups I am looking at, quite simply because the participants are either clearly identified as a particular teacher or researcher or animator (with an affiliated email address/ISP), or their identity is easily discoverable. This is simply not the same as someone with a pseudonym/Hotmail address, posting their thoughts on *Seinfeld* to a discussion group. However, as Fuller (1988) has made clear (see Chapter 2), there are very similar pressures at work in 'conventional' academic/disciplinary discourse, where what people say and how they say it in the 'public' forum need not (and perhaps should not) be seen as directly corresponding to what they themselves personally feel. There is etiquette and there is netiquette; both rely on one not saying the wrong things. These issues of community and behaviour are further addressed in the final two chapters of the thesis.

## Chapter 8

### Animation as an academic community

In this chapter I will examine the concept of an academic or intellectual community, in particular the way/s in which animation scholars and practitioners might be said to constitute a community. This will involve exploring specific concepts at a theoretical level, but this will be combined with some of the comments and findings from the questionnaires and email exchanges that I have had with animation researchers and teachers. These 'data' are most definitely qualitative in nature: although there are not enough responses to make statistically valid claims, they do nonetheless point to areas of interest about how animation is *perceived*. And this is the main point of this research project: to seek to understand how animation is constituted/perceived as a knowledge area, and offer some commentary on how, if at all, this impacts on how it is taught and understood. In Chapter 5 I discussed the notion of animation as a discipline; this chapter will extend some of what was said there in the light of specific responses. The materialist hermeneutics referred to in Chapter 7 will therefore be used to discuss a range of different people working in different contexts who, for a number of reasons, see 'Animation' as the factor that links them to a diverse set of other people. The analysis of what these people say and how they contextualise and discuss their own experience is therefore married to the theoretical consideration of Animation as a discipline and as a practice.

## **The concept of an 'academic community': tribes, territories and inter/disciplines**

The notion of a 'community' seems straightforward, commonsensical. It also has immediate connotations of support and helpfulness. Yet there are also senses of the term linked to exclusivity, fear of others, and perhaps a suffocating orthodoxy, where norms have to be adhered to. We need only think of the rules and regulations of a school, prison or other communities like that to see that the term is never entirely a positive and cosy one. This latter point also reminds us that Foucault is perhaps one of the most useful cultural critics to invoke on this particular subject, as he concentrated on the ways that 'discipline' (in both its 'corrective'/power sense, and its 'educational' sense) altered and structured the ways in which individuals and institutions behaved (Foucault 1991). The main questions addressed in this chapter are therefore going to be concerned with this notion of 'community' and how it is constructed and maintained. How do 'we' decide who belongs to a specific community? Can a community be defined only by those people who constitute it? How useful is it to talk about 'academic communities' and what difference, if any, does this term have from the more commonly-used term 'discipline'? These questions will be addressed in relation to what has been said in preceding chapters about animation as an object/process, and some of the thoughts of practitioners in the area. There will certainly be some points made here that can be applied to other newly-

developing fields of knowledge, as I think it is the case that the kind of analysis I am carrying out here is a vital reflexive part of any scholarship. In that respect, some of what I am arguing is not necessarily *unique* to Animation as a field. However, I think that Animation's cutting-edge position in relation to a very wide range of other areas means that it does give us a very potent lens through which to view contemporary cross-disciplinary behaviour. How people negotiate where they belong within this web of knowledge and behaviour is the key to further understanding. Animation's strength and complexity stems from the fact that it is mobilised as a discourse by such a wide range of people, and it is this fact that requires the careful scrutiny afforded it here.

Most useful here is the work of Becher (1989), recently updated and revised as Becher and Trowler (2001). It is an investigation into 'the linkages between academic cultures (the 'tribes') and disciplinary knowledge (their 'territories')' (xiv). As such, it attempts to explore the dialectical relationship between the social/institutional aspects of knowledge production, and the epistemological aspects, or the nature of disciplinary knowledge itself. Related theories were addressed in some detail earlier in this project: Part One dealt with the more abstract epistemological debates, the distinctions between disciplines and so on. Here I am more interested in exploring how these issues apply directly to the notion of a 'community', and Animation in particular.

Of particular interest to this study is what happens when people working in disparate areas can be argued to constitute a field or knowledge area - or, to use Becher's terms, can be said to be an 'academic tribe'. The term 'tribal' brings to mind a close-knit community, though they could be spread over a wide territory. In the case of cross- or inter-disciplinary fields such as Feminism/Women's Studies, or Animation Studies, it is arguably the 'diffuseness' of the community that gives it its interest and potency. This is potentially paradoxical of course: the more diffuse or 'spread out' something is, the more it is usually viewed as being inherently weak, lacking in cohesion, and so on. And yet, this can be seen as a strength in the sense that the academics working in these various areas bring a plurality to what they do: rather than being defined (by others) in a prescriptive 'disciplinary' way, they *choose* to define themselves in relation to a specific subject matter. This idea of academics determining what they do is potentially problematic as it reinscribes *agency* into the equation. In the context of 21st century higher education we tend to see the autonomy of academics and researchers being eroded, so this notion of a diffuse set of people constituting a community, despite seeming 'far apart' is something that is well worth developing. It certainly takes us into the realm of the politics of identities more usually thought through in relation to class or ethnicity, and particularly the idea of the 'diaspora' or 'spreading out' from a given source. This is something I return to below when discussing the 'politics of

recognition'. It is interesting to think of a widespread, multiply-situated set of people as having a common set of interests and goals. This kind of 'politicised' dimension is more pronounced with knowledge areas such as Post-Colonial Studies or Feminist Studies, but my point would be that all these fields suggest is that academics need to think about *how* what they do relates to the real world, and this also means thinking about the connections they have with other - apparently unconnected - academic areas.

### **Classification and nominalism**

The issues of agency and self-determination cohere under the heading of what might be termed *nominalism*. In simple terms, this means that if (enough) people describe what they do as 'X', then 'X' becomes a recognised category - something with a name. Once a category exists then (other) people can and will (re)define themselves in relation to it - they will choose to join, oppose, ignore . . . In more theoretical terms, we can look to Foucault's 'archaeology' for how such a nominalism might work, and what its consequences might be. Rouse (1994) points to how Foucault's investigation into 'historical reconfigurations of knowledge' (92) tends towards a nominalist position:

He argued that particular investigations were structured by which concepts and statements were intelligible together, how those statements were organized thematically, which of those statements counted as 'serious', who was empowered to speak seriously, and what questions and procedures were relevant to assess the credibility of those

statements that were taken seriously. These historically situated fields of knowledge . . . also included the *objects* under discussion. Foucault was thus committed to a strong nominalism in the human sciences: the types of objects in their domains were not already demarcated, but came into existence only contemporaneous with the discursive formations that made it possible to talk about them (93).

It is useful to think about this issue in the context of the growth of disciplinary ways of categorising knowledge. The main difference is that Foucault's project was examining much larger-scale shifts in the way that knowledge was, literally, 'understood'. My point here is that the idea of nominalism fits in with the notion of academic communities engaging with each other discursively - in other words, they talk to each other, generate categories and terms in order to label what they do. In this respect, we are very much in the realm of discourse and social constructionism, identified by Potter, for example (1996). How different people interact with and interpret the intersecting discourses that make up 'their' academic space is a major part of such analysis. But this has to be done in conjunction with a careful analysis of the material contexts in which these people operate. For example, in terms of Animation, it can be the case that it is mobilised as a discourse *within* pre-existing disciplinary structures: that is, Animation as 'part of' Film, Media, Art and Design, and so on. Unlike, say, Feminism/Women's Studies, which undoubtedly sees the challenging of straightforwardly disciplinary ways of knowing as one of its aims (see Hartman and Messer-Davidow, 1991), Animation can have the difficulty (or, some would say, the advantage) of being easily subsumed into 'other' areas

like Film, Media and the like. As I shall suggest later in this chapter, and also in Chapter 9, however, we need to move towards recognising that Animation acts as a connecting discourse between apparently diverse areas of enquiry.

Another manifestation of nominalism is that raised in previous chapters - the fundamental problem of distinguishing between disciplines, subjects, specialisms, knowledge areas, and so on. There seem to be many terms that are used interchangeably, and this is before we delve into the murky waters of terms like interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, or cross-disciplinary. So, what we *name* what we do matters because in a very real sense this gives us the framework in which to *understand* what we do. But this matters not just on the level of labels like 'Animation Studies', 'Film Studies' and the like, but also on how one *categorises* these labels: are they disciplines, interdisciplines, specialisms within disciplines?

Bowker and Star (2000) have done some interesting work on classification and how this impacts on understanding. For them, classification is about norms and standards, and problems arise when things 'do not fit'. This is certainly the case with disciplinary ways of thinking, where it is vital to be seen to fit in with accepted notions of what the discipline does. Classification is therefore about defining and labelling what one (or anyone else) does, and it is a powerful factor in determining



whether one is included or excluded from a particular community. It is important to note here that the term 'standards' has a double meaning. Bowker and Star are using it to discuss the ways that 'content' is standardised, or that there is a commonly understood meaning of a particular classification/category. So, when we say 'narcotics' or 'sexually transmitted disease', or 'animation' or 'Film Studies', these labels denote a certain group of items (or theories, or texts, or research methods) and should mean more or less the same thing to everyone. Of course, the term 'standards' can also be used (and most often *is* used, in educational contexts) to mean something akin to 'levels of achievement' - as in 'standards are falling!' - and it is interesting to think through the connections between these two meanings of this term.

As Bowker and Star make clear, there are problems with things appearing to be 'in' more than one category. They state (10) that categories should be 'mutually exclusive', but note (11) that, in the real world, such an apparently simple requirement is unlikely to be met. 'In the case of unique classificatory systems, people disagree about their nature; they ignore or misunderstand them; or they routinely mix together different and contradictory principles' (ibid.). In short, a classification or set of categories is only as useful as the people using it want it to be, or make it. But how does this cope with something like 'Animation' as a knowledge area, or any knowledge area that can be said to be 'interdisciplinary' in nature? They

would probably argue that its existence on the boundaries of 'other' disciplines is what gives it its distinct characteristics. (Either that, or make the decision to state in no uncertain terms that Animation is 'part of' another specific category, like Film Studies). They do in fact come up with the term 'residual categories', something that covers the 'not elsewhere classified' (11). This seems to be a kind of 'none of the above' (or 'all of the above') manoeuvre, and reveals the problems of attempting to categorise exhaustively: there will always be things that appear not to fit (or those that wilfully refuse to fit).

Bowker and Star's use of 'classification' can be compared with Bernstein's use of the same term. Bernstein refers to 'strong' and 'weak' classification in terms of curriculum objects (see Chapter 2). But, as Bowker and Star make clear, the notion of classification must be seen as a social process, something that is *done* in relation to these objects. This is why the discursive dimension of how knowledge areas are classified is so important. As we shall see below, the ways in which people *negotiate* their positions in relation to Animation Studies is what gives the field a good deal of its potency. Certainly, the mixing together of 'different and contradictory principles' is part of such negotiation – and this is caused by recognition that Animation is not easy to classify, and neither are the people who engage with and practise it.

### **Animation: classifying the subject and naming the community**

I have discussed (in Chapter 7) the methodological implications of the data collection I have carried out for this research. As noted there, my role is that of a 'participant-observer', as I see myself as part of the communities I am examining. This 'participant-observer' status is inflected by the fact that we are talking about predominantly *online* forms of communication, such as email exchanges, discussion-group posts, and the like. This raises some specific issues about the 'status' of the data which have been considered in Chapter 7. My concern here is to outline how responses to an email questionnaire, and subsequent exchanges effectively map onto some of the points I have already made about the discursive dimension of Animation Studies as a discipline, how its position and that of its practitioners is something that is *negotiated* within specific material and institutional contexts. Rather than offering an analysis of a large-scale set of empirical data therefore, what follows examines *tendencies* or what would be called, in the terminology of Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann (1974), 'typifications'. The responses I have gathered therefore represent tendencies and approaches to teaching animation, and offer a diagnostic 'snapshot'.<sup>1</sup>

Turning to look at the email questionnaire responses in terms of how the respondents actually categorise or define animation, there was some

understandable blurring and overlapping of categories. In many ways, the difficulties of 'naming' and categorising the object of study, and deciding where it 'belongs' in terms of institutional context, are the central concerns of this research. The categories to choose from on the questionnaire were 'a type/genre of film', 'a mode of production', 'an art form in its own right' and 'other'. Two respondents considered animation to be 'a type/genre of film', though interestingly they also checked the next two categories as well (i.e. they see animation as inhabiting all three of the categories). This is an example of the blurring of categories and boundaries mentioned above. There is a suggestion here that 'a type/genre of film' is one of the more problematic definitions for animation scholars and teachers. Despite its 'common-sense' connotations - after all, most people's interaction with, and consumption of, animation is in the context of film and television - this takes us to the root of the issue. While seeing animation as 'a type/genre of film' would seem unproblematic to most people, it raises the issue of power and 'ownership' in the sense that 'film' is given primacy in the relationship. So, the fact that the respondents who checked this category also checked 'a mode of production' and 'an art form in its own right' points towards this set of problems. They feel the need to qualify what they are saying, so as not to relegate animation to being a mere subset of 'film' as a whole.

There is also a contradiction here: how can animation be 'a type/genre of film' *and* 'an art form in its own right'? Surely the two categories are

mutually exclusive, with the former suggesting that animation is a subdivision within the larger category or form of film, whilst the latter clearly stakes out animation's claim for self-determination. However, this is only a contradiction if we are locked into an overly simplistic view of what animation is (or can be). Animation is actually a vast range of practices, and the studio-produced work of Chuck Jones, or the output of Disney can easily be seen as a type/genre of film, whilst the work of Norman McLaren or Len Lye can seem to fall more into the other categories. This complexity was addressed in Chapter 4, along with the difficulties of defining Animation. The different ways that Animation can be classified – as a type of film, as an autonomous artistic practice, etc. – point to the fact that there are potentially conflicting notions of what Animation 'is' and where it belongs. It is this *conflict* which helps to constitute Animation as a fertile ground: people who work in the field of Animation constantly have to negotiate the contradictions that we can see in the questionnaire responses. Also, as I argued in Chapter 5, Animation's apparent 'multi-sitedness' means that it draws together a wide range of experts 'from' other disciplines, and this underlines Animation's diversity while also emphasising the positive aspect of discursive conflict in knowledge production. What makes Animation such a notable area is, precisely, the contested nature of what it *is* and *where* it belongs.

A recent debate on the Animation Journal e-discussion group

concerning the question 'Is Animation a genre?' is useful in delineating some of these issues, and linking them to questions of teaching. What comes across in a number of the posts is the problematic nature of some of the terms used to categorise animation, but that they retain a usefulness in a pedagogic sense. In other words, these are not essential, immutable categories, but are labels that groups of people place on things in order to better understand those things. What is important is the *reflection* on the *process* of naming and classification, and how it might change over time and according to context, rather than the names and categories per se. As one contributor puts it:

Although from a creative point of view, classifying animation may seem like a limiting and unnecessary thing to do, when we teach our students . . . about animation (in relation to film in general) it is very helpful to have some way to distinguish animation from other types of film practice.

The way in which I have dealt with this (one I am not entirely happy with) is to teach film as a mode, using the notion of modes of film practice as put forth by Bordwell and Thompson. In other words, animation tends to have its own institutional history, a set of conventions, a set of viewer expectations, a set of filmmakers and critics/scholars who promote it, etc. Like the classical Hollywood cinema, international art cinema, historical-materialist cinema, et al, animation brings with it expectations and calls upon particular viewing strategies, etc.

This draws out some of the dilemmas inherent in teaching animation and recognises that classifying always places limits and boundaries (and that this can be something that is resisted). What is important here though is less the specific typology or approach that this contributor suggests than the fact that they are open to a materialist hermeneutic methodology in

discussing animation. This is evident from their attention to the changing, multiple contexts in which animation can be understood and defined; the *provisional* nature of their approach (that is, the suggestion that this might not be perfect, but it does help us to develop some knowledge about animation); and the emphasis given to collective interpretation as the key to understanding.

To return to the questionnaires, it is interesting to note that only one respondent checked the 'other' category in this 'defining animation' section. Clearly, the respondents who checked a number of categories were voicing their sense of dissatisfaction with any particular one category (i.e. '*none* of these is *the* answer . . .'). By checking a number of (admittedly overlapping) categories they were signifying the complexity of the term/field 'animation'. In a sense, though, it would have been more appropriate if more of them had checked 'other' and then elaborated upon why. The one person who did, specified their 'own' category like this: the 'exploitation of various mental and physiological processes leading to the creation of the illusion of motion (or change)'. They then add, crucially, 'I think that animation actually includes what we think of as the cinema rather than the other way around'. This is clearly suggestive of some of the issues of hierarchies or 'ownership' of particular subjects/disciplines by others. Here we have stated, in no uncertain terms, an inversion of the conventional view - that animation is a 'type/genre of film [cinema]'. (Having said this, the returns seem to suggest

that this is far from a conventional, or consensus, view amongst *these* subjects. However, I think the 'general consensus' - i.e. the commonly held, lay-person's view - *would* be that 'animation' was a 'type/genre of film'). Again, this raises the issue of a polemical appropriation of 'territory' (see Becher & Trowler, 2001). This point also echoes some of the debates covered in Chapters 4 and 5 about how animation is defined, firstly in relation to other forms of moving image production, and secondly as a discipline.

It is clear then that one of the key areas where useful tensions and contradictions can be drawn out is nomenclature. I mentioned earlier that, when dealing with a range of respondents from a number of different cultural contexts, one may well find the same term being used to describe very different things, or very different terms being used to name what are very similar if not the same things. For example, the term 'course' can be taken to mean a degree scheme (pretty much) in its entirety - a three year programme of study - *or* a specific unit of study within that degree (sometimes referred to as a 'module', or even a 'unit', depending on the institution). In other words, very different lengths of study can be given the same 'label'.

Depending on one's standpoint, the way in which animation can appear to be all (or a lot of) things to all (or a lot of) people can be seen as a



positive sign of its hybrid, heterogeneous nature, or it can be seen as a frustrating sign of its lack of any 'base' or specificity as an 'object' or area of study. Where one situates animation in institutional terms – and the label under which it functions – is as clear a signifier as any of what one perceives it to be. However, it must be kept in mind that scholarly activity can make for strange bedfellows, and that where a subject is located might be to do with particular financial or political reasons rather than any pedagogical ones. Similarly, one might teach a subject within a particular wider context, yet have no real 'affinity' for that context (e.g. someone might teach Animation within a Faculty of Communications, yet their approach is more akin to that seen in art school).

There are a total of three respondents who identify their immediate context as an 'Animation Department'. However, these departments are all situated in slightly different wider contexts. One Animation Department is situated in a 'School of Film/TV/Media Studies', the second is in a 'Media faculty', and the third is an Animation Department in a 'School of Communication, Art and Design'. In addition to these, there are three further respondents whose teaching of animation goes on within my specified category of 'Film/TV/Media'. The actual question here is 'In which Faculty/Department/School is your teaching situated?', and 'Film/TV/Media' is given as one of the categories or answers to it. Certainly, the teaching of animation that I do takes place in the context of a Film and Television

Studies subject area within a Department of Performing Arts, which is in turn within a Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. (However, see Chapter 9 for a discussion of some potential changes in the way Brunel deals with Animation). It is a similar situation with these respondents in that they are situated in a 'localised' context where 'Film/TV/Media' is the *smallest*, but most *immediately relevant* label. That is, their animation teaching goes on under a label *other than* 'animation'. Within their institution there is no identifiable area known as 'animation', in the sense of animation having an 'institutional voice'. In other words, the teaching of animation is something done by teachers who exist in 'another' context, teachers exploring their own specific research/teaching interests. They are 'Film/TV/Media' lecturers who *just happen* to teach some animation.

The idea that animation exists and is taught in a variety of different institutional (or departmental/faculty/school) contexts is further proved by the relatively high proportion of respondents who note that they work in 'Other' categories. (It is useful at this point to refer back to Figure 1 in Chapter 5, on page 167). The ones who note 'Other' are: one in 'Art Theory', one in 'Asian and Middle Eastern Studies' (this respondent also teaches in 'Film/TV/Media'), one in a 'School of Art, Media and Design', one in a 'School of Communications', and one who teaches in a 'children and youth freetime center'. In addition to these, there are also two who checked 'Computing/Engineering' (one is only in this category, the other has this as

their 'secondary job', with the 'primary job' being in 'Film/TV/Media'), one who checked 'Art and Design', and one who checked 'Humanities'. The complexities and overlaps between names can again be seen as considerable (e.g. 'Communications' as a 'School' covers a large range of material, incorporating 'Media' etc.), but it is important to note when respondents decide to *distinguish* what they do from something else. For instance, some might say that to distinguish between 'Art and Design' (my category) and 'Art Media and Design' (what one respondent put in the 'Other' category) is quibbling. But there is clearly a difference between the two, and it is a difference that can be rhetorically invoked to 'stake' a particular claim.

The final thing to note about the immediate contexts in which animation might be situated is that one respondent outlines a very interesting scenario at their college. It is 'an alternative liberal arts college' where 'all students earn a bachelor of arts degree'. They 'sign up for a fulltime program usually taught by 2 or more faculty [i.e. members of staff] from different disciplines'. The respondent notes that their position is 'Member of the Faculty, Animation'. This scenario is interesting because it is based on finding the interdisciplinary aspects of parts of the wider curriculum, and attempting to explore them. So, all work is based around particular interdisciplinary 'courses' or programs, such as 'Building Character', which explores the concept of character through the 'theory, history and practice of character

animation' but also 'dealt with ideas about character in literature and psychology'. The respondent also notes similar collaborative/interdisciplinary efforts with Dance and Comparative Religions ('Marking Time: Rituals, Gestures and Languages of Movement') and some in a physical science faculty (where they will be 'teaching animation in relation to patterns in nature and time'). As the respondent continues:

We do not have departments but the faculty is loosely organized into Planning Units (I'm in Expressive Arts) through which we write curriculum and deal with space, staffing & equipment concerns. Ideally, we all teach interdisciplinarily so we are not 'situated' in any particular place.

On the one hand, then, there can be a highly stratified sense of being 'situated', with attendant notions of fighting for territory, or feeling (rightly or wrongly) 'enclosed' by another curriculum area. On the other hand, there can be a rather more 'unsituated' scenario (some would say 'rootless', or point to the lack of specificity inherent in this). However, the latter is certainly interesting from a pedagogic perspective, as it takes Animation as essentially multi-faceted and able to 'exist' on a number of levels at any one time.

This example is useful because it illustrates what are, for me, the strengths and complexities of animation from a pedagogic perspective. As argued in Chapter 5 - via the concepts of nesting, discursivity and recursivity - animation can usefully be conceptualised as 'being in a number of places' at once, and that the interaction between these apparently

separate nodes of enquiry is what characterises animation as a ‘disciplinary’ phenomenon. Rather than simply trying to discuss and categorise animation in relation to film (or, even more prescriptively, *as a type of film*) this approach looks to explore the connections between very different areas of knowledge, using animation as the common currency. Therefore, while animation’s supposedly nascent disciplinary status can be explained by the relative ‘youth’ of a recognisable set of programmes of study dealing with animation in some form, I would suggest that animation is always in ‘a process of becoming’ as a knowledge area. The interaction between disparate fields of knowledge (e.g. Film, Electrical Engineering, Dance, Philosophy) that are all grappling with definitions of animation and how it impacts on ‘their’ field, leads to a critical understanding of the knowledge produced. Knowledges that are usually ‘kept apart’ can be ‘pulled together’ by animation, and the resulting interaction and reflection not only leads to a fuller understanding of animation, but also a more critically aware notion of the knowledge areas themselves. (I return to the idea of ‘critical practice’ in relation to animation in Chapter 9, as well as examining how an apparently diverse set of disciplines can all be ‘united’ by their examination of animation).

### **Institutional constraints: Subject Benchmarking**

Different groups will recognise and use the same classification systems; if this were not the case then no-one would understand anyone else. As

Bowker and Star point out, classifications are 'objects for co-operation across social worlds, or . . . boundary objects' (15). In this sense, we can see that the classification system that groups agree upon and use on a day to day basis is therefore constitutive of an idea of community, or who belongs and who does not. A key example here is recent initiatives in Subject Benchmarking.

The Subject Benchmarking procedure is one that concerns practitioners and teachers in that it sets out to define what constitutes a particular subject at degree level, and also prescribes certain 'threshold' standards. As the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) documentation puts it:

The development of subject-based benchmark standards was a key recommendation of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE) report, being seen as essential to ensure public and employer confidence that higher education awards, especially at first degree level, were recognised nationally and understood widely. Subject benchmarks were regarded alongside the publication of programme specifications by institutions and the development of national frameworks for qualifications as the foundations for creating that confidence (QAA, 2001).

On the one hand this could be seen as overly prescriptive and potentially restrictive to 'academic freedom'. On the other hand the 'realism' of the position is that the ways that (higher) education has changed in the past decade or so have made an ability to recognise and respond to the needs of the market (which is, effectively, what 'public and employer confidence' translates as) an essential factor.

Examining how Benchmarking will impact on my teaching/research area (in Benchmarking categories, this is 'Communication, media, film and television studies'), it has to be said that the categories are elastic, to say the least. Indeed, some might say that they were so flexible in places that one could make virtually any course with a broadly 'media' orientation fit into the category. While this sounds positive (or, rather, not negative), it does lead one to question the point of benchmarking: not wanting to be too prescriptive, the criteria clearly lack specificity. As I say, this is not necessarily a problem, and the QAA would no doubt argue that the guidelines are meant to be enabling rather than simply stating 'what needs to be done'. However, one has to ask what the point of sketching out categories actually is, when these categories seem vague enough to include anyone who wants to come in.

One thing that is interesting regarding benchmarking is what happens to a subject like Animation. In the lead up to the benchmarking process, there was some trepidation in certain animation quarters (e.g. the ASIFA [Association du Films d'Animation] Education Group) that 'maybe such bureaucratic rumblings [i.e. the benchmarking process] would strait jacket some of the things people wanted to do' (Phillips, 2001a). Phillips then goes on to quote from an email he received from the QAA, in response to questions about animation's position regarding benchmarking:

The answer is we would expect individual programmes to refer to the appropriate benchmarking statements. For example, some programmes in Animation may find it more useful to refer to the Communications statement than the Art and Design one and vice versa. Other programmes may not find that any of the benchmarking statements are appropriate reference points (ibid.).

As noted above, this is laudably flexible. So much so, in fact, that one has to ask, again, what is the point of benchmarking? It seems fair enough that certain subjects like Animation can and should refer to more than one set of criteria: this simply recognises that the subject in question is 'hybrid' or crosses categories. I find it hard to believe that any programme would not be able to find 'appropriate reference points' within *any* of the benchmarking criteria (which is what the final point made is saying), as the criteria are so flexible. Also, what becomes of these programmes that cannot 'fit into' the benchmarking? Surely the point of the exercise, rightly or wrongly, is to attempt to categorise *all* course programmes: this seems to be a 'none of the above' safety-hatch of the worst kind, as it points to a fundamental flaw in the process, but this flaw is not addressed, it is avoided. The email response effectively recognises that Animation could well be seen as one of Bowker and Star's 'residual categories'.

Whatever the merits or otherwise of benchmarking, these statements do underline the position in which Animation finds itself. It is categorised in a number of ways, with some course programmes falling into a more Art and Design-oriented area, and others perhaps falling into a more



Communication, media, film and television studies-oriented area. This variety of possibilities is of course borne out by the range of 'homes' in which we find Animation as a subject. As the questionnaire responses - and other email communications - reveal, the people actually doing the teaching and researching in Animation see themselves as inhabiting a wide range of specialisms, deployed across 'other' disciplinary designations. When it comes to a process like subject benchmarking, Animation finds itself in the position of thinking, quite literally, 'where do we belong?' Obviously, *all* subjects have to go through these moments of reflection, but with Animation I would suggest it is much more pronounced, for the reasons outlined above in relation to the email respondent from the alternative liberal arts college. For example, as a degree course in 'Film and Television Studies', the course on which I teach quite clearly falls into the Communication, media, film and television studies benchmark category. However, someone teaching on a BA Animation Studies degree will have a much more difficult job categorising where they 'fit'. In fact, the attempt to try and make them 'fit' somewhere will inevitably mute or close off potentially interesting pedagogic approaches. These factors play a major role in determining how much of a 'community spirit' a particular subject area might have. It is also worth remembering that *not seeming to fit* into specific categories can be a potential source of such 'spirit', especially if those 'outsiders' communicate effectively with each other. However, this takes us into a complex area - that of 'recognition', in the sense that members of a putative community

have to recognise each other and be recognised by others as members of a community – to which I shall now turn.

### **'Recognition' and the 'dialogism' of identity**

Although Becher and Trowler's work constitutes perhaps the most thoroughgoing analysis of how academics behave in a 'tribal' or 'territorial' manner, it is worth noting that the issue could be further clarified by exploring these issues in relation to some recent theories of 'nation' and 'national' identity. In particular, the work of Hjort (1996, 2000), Anderson (1983) and Taylor (1992) offer up some interesting points for anyone wanting to understand how a specific group constitute themselves as a group.

One of the contentions of Taylor and those who have followed his ideas is that identity - whether individual or that of a community - is forged dialogically rather than monologically. In other words, we work out our identities in relation to others. Such a sense of identity therefore revolves around what Taylor terms 'the politics of recognition': we achieve a sense of ourselves, an identity, by 'being recognised' by others. As Taylor puts it:

People do not acquire the languages [and here he means 'not only the words we speak, but also other modes of expression whereby we define ourselves'] needed for self-definition on their own. Rather, we are introduced to them through interaction with others who matter to us - what George Herbert Mead called 'significant others' . . . We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. Even after we outgrow some of these others - our parents, for instance - and they disappear from our

lives, the conversation with them continues within us as long as we live (Taylor, 1994: 32-3).

This way of thinking about identity as a dialogue, and as something that is dependent on those 'outside' as much as the individual, or those 'inside' a group, can clearly be extended to thinking about knowledge areas and disciplinarity. Indeed, my discussion in Chapter 5 did as much, when I talked about animation as a 'discursive field'. What I would like to do in this chapter is to continue and extend that discussion, focusing in particular on how Taylor et al's ideas about identity and recognition can help us to understand a knowledge field like animation.

Taylor's thesis was concerned with identity and its impact on and structuring of multiculturalism. It is therefore no surprise to see his theories applied in relation to national identity - for instance the idea of national cinema in the work of Hjort (1996, 2000). It is my contention that the theory can be adapted and applied to knowledge communities or disciplines. The notion of 'recognition' resonates throughout much of the writing on 'disciplinarity', although it may not be termed such. Having one's work 'recognised' in academic terms is meaningful in a number of senses. First of all, there is the sense of the work being literally 'recognised' as belonging to the discipline. This could take a number of forms - e.g. one's teaching expertise leading to a post in a particular department. Also, research papers being accepted as 'relevant' to certain conferences (but not others), or the

categorical imperatives of the RAE leading to one's work being grouped with others' as part of a more or less coherent package. The second main sense of 'recognition' is related to the first, but is perhaps more commonsensical: the idea of achieving 'recognition' by one's peers, of becoming an expert, a 'voice' in disciplinary terms.

All of this seems straightforward enough. People need to work to earn 'recognition' in their chosen field. Some time later, they may perhaps be instrumental in shaping who in turn is 'recognised'. All of this seems to fit in with the development and growth of knowledge in a disciplinary world. And therein lies the problem: the implication is that the 'recognition' is going on in a stable universe, where continuities reign. As the preceding discussion of animation as a putative discipline has suggested, things become more complicated when we are talking about a knowledge area that is characterised by 'hybridity' or diversity, as it also becomes less clear who the 'gatekeepers' are. (This is not just true of animation, but of other areas like Women's Studies, where it is harder to point to a disciplinary 'core'; this is indicative of some of the ongoing changes that have occurred in the kinds of knowledge that are now part of academe, as well as the ways that these knowledges are classified and viewed).

Taylor's theory of a 'politics of recognition' draws attention to some of the larger-scale shifts that have taken place in the past two centuries -

essentially the shift from the premodern to the modern era - changes that also have an enormous importance for how knowledge has been understood and classified. In this sense, we can draw some useful connections between the emergence of new ways of conceiving and constructing personal and group identities, and the emergence of new ways of understanding knowledge structures. The idea of 'authenticity', that each person has an individual or 'original way of being human' (30) is only something that emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century; before this point 'no one thought that the differences between human beings had this kind of moral significance' (ibid.). It is also worth noting, as Taylor does, that Herder (from whom he is deriving this conception of 'originality') talked about *group* as well as *individual* senses of the term: '[j]ust like individuals, a *Volk* should be true to itself, that is, its own culture' (31).

Crucially,

[t]his new idea of authenticity was . . . in part an offshoot of the decline of hierarchical society. In those earlier societies, what we would now call identity was largely fixed by one's social position. That is, the background that explained what people recognized as important to themselves was to a great extent determined by their place in society, and whatever roles and activities attached to this position (31).

So, in the move from premodern/feudal systems to the modern era, we also have a move from 'honor' ('in the ancien regime sense in which it is intrinsically linked to inequalities' (27)) to 'dignity' (where 'the underlying premise . . . is that everyone shares in it' (ibid.)). Again, this sounds

straightforward and a desirable part of a more liberal-democratic model of society. The problem is that as a shift takes place that breaks down hierarchies or apparently 'natural', fixed identities, in favour of a situation where - potentially at least - every individual's rights and 'authenticity' is 'recognised', the paradox of recognition makes itself felt. That is, there is a contradiction in that everyone has 'equal rights', but everyone also has an identity that is 'authentic'; indeed, it is the 'authenticity' of someone's identity that should ensure their recognition and conferment of equal rights. This contradiction makes itself keenly felt in relation to multiculturalism. As Appiah states in a response to Taylor's essay 'The politics of recognition':

If what matters about me is my authentic and individual self, why is so much contemporary talk of identity about large categories - gender, ethnicity, nationality, 'race', sexuality - that seem so far from individual? (Appiah, 149).

In terms of contemporary academic behaviour, a similar paradox can be detected. A scholar must be 'original' and 'authentic' in the senses noted above, yet the only way that their work will be 'recognised' is if it fits into a pre-existing category. (And it is worth noting here that someone could write an excoriatingly critical piece, rejecting accepted theories, and this would still 'fit in' a category by virtue of what it was railing *against*). By the same token, a piece of doctoral research like this has to be original and break new ground, but must also stick to certain rules and engage with existing material in a way that could militate against this very originality. This is summed up in the phrase 'original contribution *to the field*': the originality is

therefore a bounded one, there are limits beyond which one's work will be misrecognised and rejected.

Such a problem is exacerbated by Animation Studies' hybrid or multi-sited character. Put bluntly, one is trying to orient oneself towards and make an original contribution to a field which is still in the process of becoming. Indeed *that very process* is, I would argue, one of the defining features of the field. This is why the concepts of discursivity, recursivity and the idea of animation 'recontextualising' specific pedagogic discourses (and, at the same time, itself being recontextualised) is so important. It also means that collaboration above and beyond the usual 'interdisciplinarity' is required: people from apparently widely divergent knowledge areas need to be able to 'recognise' each other as undertaking research into and teaching of 'Animation'. Furthermore, this means that a clear and careful typology of people engaged with Animation is essential, as it will help us to map points of contact, and more easily discuss the pedagogic aspects of the area.

This chapter has addressed some of the issues relating to community and the recognition implicit in sustaining one. In the case of Animation, the 'community' is one that is diverse and spread out, rather than distinctly focused. As we saw in Chapter 5, viewing Animation as a 'discipline' in the conventional sense is difficult, and the place of Animation is something that is in flux, constantly being (re-)negotiated. This is due in no small part to the

fact that those *practising* Animation (whether as researchers, teachers, or practitioners) are drawn from a wide variety of 'other' areas, with Animation as their 'common denominator'. How these people rhetorically construct the field – via 'recognition' and a dialogic/discursive interaction with their material and institutional contexts – is something that I shall continue to address in the final chapter, which will construct the typology of Animation-related practitioners, as well as talk more specifically about pedagogic approaches to Animation.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken as a whole, the empirical data I have used form a substantial body of exchanges, personal communications and other interactions that inform my reflections. However, compared to some large-scale empirically-based research, such a 'body' would not be considered viable. There are two points to be made in response to this. First of all, questions related to how generalisable are any findings, tend to stress a quantitative, large-scale approach to research which by definition finds smaller-scale qualitatively-based research such as this wanting. Secondly, I am mapping instances of how a particular phenomenon (Animation) is talked about and categorised, and how this 'discourse' about Animation shapes our understanding of it. Clearly, while not wishing to overstate the importance of certain responses (e.g. if only one person said 'X' about Animation or their teaching of it), I think it is perverse to not discuss the *theoretical* importance of what someone says, if it happens to be interesting. The example in the main text (pp. 255-6) is a case in point: a single respondent says something pedagogically very interesting about their teaching of Animation and the context in which it is carried out; this is useful for the ways in which it offers potential connections to other ways of teaching, as much as it is for describing that particular person's practice.



## Chapter 9

### Towards a typology of Animation

This final chapter will reconsider the questions asked by this research about the 'place' of Animation. My main focus – or rather, starting point – has been the place of Animation 'within' Film and Media Studies. The contention has been that Animation can only be understood as a discursive field in *relation* to the many other disciplinary fields in which it 'appears', and that the relationship it has with Film and Media is of particular interest in the light of contemporary developments in digital aesthetics. *How* and *where* Animation is 'placed' is of vital importance and raises issues about *who* places it, and for what reasons. Therefore, one of the main aims in this chapter is to construct a typology of 'Animation' as a field – this including 'animation' as a kind of text, a process, a knowledge area etc. – as well as the different kinds of people operating within 'Animation'. It will therefore draw upon all that has been said in previous chapters and implicitly point towards some of the aspects of this discussion that require further attention. All of the interacting and overlapping factors that impact on animation will be reviewed and the contribution to understanding the field will be assessed. Bernstein's concept of 'recontextualisation' shall be proposed as one of the best ways to understand and delineate Animation's multi-faceted (and multi-sited) character. Animation appears to be many things to many people, and we need a theoretical framework that allows us to discuss this. With this in mind, I shall adapt Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's (1991)

concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' as a way of structuring such a discussion. This term refers to the ways that individuals learn in a 'socially situated' manner, and how communities of practice are sustained across a wide range of contexts and groups. This will therefore tie in with the 'discursive' character of Animation proposed in Chapter 5, as well as the materialist hermeneutical framework outlined in Chapters 7 and 8. The final key concept to feature in this chapter is 'critical practice', something I shall argue is crucial for Animation and its practitioners, not least due to the emphasis on technology in many Animation courses and the Animation production process as a whole. A reading of how Animation practitioners, teachers, and researchers orient themselves and each other in relation to technology shall be the springboard into a consideration of some of the broader implications of this research. The 'rationalising' and 'instrumental' trajectory of discourses of technology tends to mean that Animation as a practice is often placed in a problematic relationship with those very technologies. The value of 'critical practice' is that it interrogates those potentially problematic relationships rather than taking them at face value. The importance of a typology of Animation is that it maps interpretations of types or tendencies within the field, thereby offering a clearer framework in which to discuss such a critical practice. As we shall see, the concept of a 'critical practice' is also invaluable because it dovetails with the notion of 'legitimate peripheral participation': as people's activities will depend on the specific material context in which they are operating at any particular

moment, it is important to discuss this within a framework that places emphasis on their ability to *critique* their shifting practices. I shall say more about this presently; first of all, we need to draw together some of the different uses and meanings of the term 'Animation'.

### **'Animation', 'animation' and 'Animation Studies': differences and overlaps**

One of the key distinctions drawn has been between different uses of the term 'animation' (complete with different case distinctions). By this I do not mean simply the use of the term 'animation' to refer to a very wide range of textual artefacts, though this is of course one of the components. My proposal is that 'Animation' should refer to the entire field, to include any textual artefact that might fall under this heading, as well as all scholarly activity, research, teaching, practice and theory. Within this super-category comes 'animation', which refers to the aforementioned textual artefacts (e.g. films, videos, games, flipbooks) and the practices that produce them (e.g. the physical things one has to do in order to 'animate' - drawing, computer programming etc.) Lastly, 'Animation Studies' refers to the scholarly activity, research, teaching and learning that is carried out in the name of 'animation'. In other words, 'animation' and 'Animation Studies' are categories *within* a larger category, 'Animation'.

Certainly there are overlaps here, not least those between the doing of

animation and its teaching and learning. For instance, how else does one 'animate' except by learning/teaching/being taught how to do it? (And this even counts for those who would describe themselves as 'self-taught'). This obviously means that those practising animation in some sense require a foot in 'Animation Studies'. My point though is that different people will recognise this 'dual status' in different ways and with varying degrees of sophistication. Some people will not recognise such 'dual status' at all, in that they will say they are 'just' animators, pure and simple. This fails to recognise that the reproduction of pre-existing modes of practice, as well as the broader debates concerning practice and theory (in a nutshell: that 'practice' can never be entirely prised away from 'theory') are issues that concern *all* practitioners and theorists. However, despite the overlaps, it is useful to set up these categories, even though they are not perfect or completely closed off from each other. Indeed one of the things that has been usefully explored in this research has been the fact that classifications and categories are *never* completely closed off, and how they overlap and discursively interact with one another is precisely where their dynamism lies.

### **A typology of Animation-related people**

One of the key things I would like to do in this chapter is propose a working typology of people who operate within the broad field commonly understood as Animation. This will involve identifying and describing a

variety of practitioners (amateur/professional animators, teachers, researchers) and, most importantly, trying to construct a model whereby their position can be 'mapped' conceptually. The fact is, there are a great many overlaps between people working in Animation, and the same person might fulfil different roles at different times. This is very much to do with Animation's diversity and multi-faceted nature. I still think it is important and possible to construct a tentative model where this diversity of actions can be understood and developed. It is here that I propose returning to Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing in order to explain how people's roles are defined and judged. Usually these concepts are reserved for discussion of curriculum *objects* (e.g. the subjects or disciplines as seen in Part One), but it is my contention that they are also useful for helping to categorise the *people* working in these areas. In other words, I wish to develop Bernstein's categories to apply them to how different social actors categorise themselves and each other. This will also mean revisiting the social constructionist framework discussed earlier, in order to make sense of how these people categorise what they and others do. As people work within their specific material contexts, producing certain things, using certain technology, and so on, they form strategic alliances. Animation is far too diverse to be simply categorised as 'one' thing, and it is in the attention to the specific working practices, alliances, recognitions between diversely-situated people that the particular character of Animation will emerge. In this respect, this research is partly mapping what is already 'out there', and

partly predicting where Animation might well go in the future. At all times, it is the pedagogic and educative dimension of Animation which is my main concern, but this cannot be separated from the other aspects of the discussion – namely, the social, historical and institutional factors that underpin the communities of practice that operate in this arena.

First of all, here is a suggested typology of people involved in 'Animation'.

#### 1. People who *just* animate.

In other words, people who engage in animation as a *practice*. Clearly, these can be further subdivided into *professional* and *amateur* animators. A further possible blurring exists in the sense that there are a good number of people who would describe themselves as 'just' animators, yet they also play a role in teaching (or at least disseminating information etc) about animation. In many respects, this is what this typology is attempting to describe – the *mobility and changeability* of certain people's positions. As noted above, I would argue that no-one is 'just' an animator, but here we need to recognise the difference between my theoretical template and the way these people would define *themselves* and be defined by others. People who come under this heading might also be 'just' animating for a wide variety of reasons – production of entertainment for the film and television industries, games production, computer modelling, systems

analysis, to name but a few. There are therefore many ‘applications’ for animation as a process; another way of stating this would be to stress that no-one *just* animates – what they do is always part of a context, and it is the reflection on that context which again brings us back to the materialist hermeneutics outlined in previous chapters (7 and 8), as well as the notion of critical practice.

## 2. People who animate and play a *significant* role in teaching others how to animate.

It is worth reflecting on the possible tensions and contradictions that might exist here, where someone might approach animation in a certain way in their own work, but then teach in a completely different way in order to give their students as wide a range of skills as possible in the competitive job market (or, to put it more cynically, they might teach in such a way because the course demands it!). This category is therefore the site of a number of tensions revolving around the ‘skills discourse’ of teaching. Namely, is one imparting the ‘correct’ and wide enough range of skills? Is there a balance between the teaching of expressive possibilities and the pragmatics of what might be required in the (future) workplace? Stray too close to either end of the ‘skills discourse’ continuum and you are either teaching students things they might never have the chance to do (or are, to coin a phrase ‘impractical’ in the wider world of ‘animating’), or you are merely ‘training’ them in the most instrumentalist sense of the term – showing them how to

carry out specific tasks which they can then replicate once in the professional workplace. It is also worth thinking through the relative dynamics of amateur and professional practitioners (the 'weight' that they carry in specific teaching scenarios) if they fall into this category. Do they see their own animation as their main job, if they are professional animators, and the teaching as secondary? Are they less valued as a teacher if they are *not* a professional animator? (A tendency is to fall into this 'master class' approach, as seen by professional filmmakers acting as tutors on certain courses – e.g. the Royal College of Art).

### 3. People who teach both animation practice and animation theory/history in equal measure.

One of the problems is teasing out practice and theory to the extent that we can judge whether such a relationship actually *is* an 'equal measure'. As has been argued elsewhere in this research, it is useful to see practice and theory as two inter-related activities within a broader process of meaning making/cultural production. What we therefore need is a typology for talking about such activities that are thoroughly enmeshed in one another, without falling into the trap of discussing them as if they are in any way separate. Mike Wayne's typology of practitioners, outlined below, is the proposed way forward. But, as we shall see, people who teach animation as a practice *and* a theory, in 'equal measure' could fall into any one of Wayne's three categories. The teaching of practice and theory together in the same course



of study does not, in and of itself, make for a fully-rounded, politically committed, *critical* approach. It's a good start, certainly, but the key is to develop a mode of *critical* practice, which actively interrogates the relationship between practice, theory and the contexts in which they are mobilised.

4. People who just teach animation as a theoretical/historical object, and do not engage in the practical side of animation in any way.

This category can of course be subdivided into those people who teach animation in an institutional field of Animation, and those that do so 'elsewhere' (e.g. within Film Studies etc.)

What interests me here is how well Bernstein's categories allow us to understand these categories and how they inter-relate. As we saw in Chapter 2 Bernstein introduces four key terms to the debate about curriculum and pedagogy – namely collection, integrated, framing and classification. The first pair of terms refer to kinds of curriculum, with collection denoting a set of components that are clearly divided from each other, and integrated denoting components that are in a more open relationship. Classification refers to the level of insulation between subjects and framing refers to the pedagogy or delivery – how something is 'framed' by the teaching. It has already been made clear that Animation in general as a knowledge field is a prime example of 'integration' in the sense that it

exists on the boundaries of – and overlaps with – a number of other fields. However, there are times when its separateness from these other fields will be more or less accentuated. It is important to remember that we can only understand something such as animation by paying attention to the specific contexts in which it is taught. Bernstein's categories are useful, but we must not be too keen to generalise from them. This is why I am arguing they should be applied to the people actually engaged in the practice, as well as the curriculum/knowledge itself. In order to do this, I shall offer a reading of these tentative categories (1-4 above) via Bernstein, but also using a typology of practitioners proposed by Mike Wayne (2001).

One of Bernstein's key theoretical innovations was therefore to suggest that the way social practices (such as teaching, forms of cultural production) are *classified* and *framed* has ideological implications. So, to take the example of strong classification and strong framing, the argument would go something like this. Strong classification works on the basis of a rigid separation of different types of particular social practices, clearly demarcated from one another. In the case of Animation, then, the suggestion would be that it has its own logic and methods and it should be learned and dealt with as an autonomous discipline. Animation would encounter clearly recognisable 'Animation problems' and would use 'Animation methods' and procedures in order to solve them. The suggestion is that there should be a perfect 'fit' between the kinds of knowledge

problems encountered and the methods and practices used to engage with them, and that such a 'fit', by definition, means that the same knowledge problems cannot be engaged with (or solved) using different methods and practices. (And the converse is true: that the particular methods and practices can only be applied to the specific knowledge problem in question, not applied to a range of other problems). This is the logic of strong classification in the Bernsteinian sense of the term.

Weak classification, on the other hand, approaches the situation differently, by working on the basis that there are inevitable overlaps, and that the 'fit' alluded to above is a fantasy. This approach will engage with particular research problems and issues, but pretty much listen to anyone who has something interesting to say on the matter, rather than exclude someone because they are not 'part of' a recognised disciplinary community. This has clear echoes of aspects of Steve Fuller's thesis on social epistemology (see Chapter 2). So, exploring issues in Animation might well involve listening to a range of researchers and students from a number of different disciplinary backgrounds. The focus becomes the actual epistemological problems (that is: what counts as valid and interesting knowledge in this context?) rather than some notion of disciplinary purity. Clearly these are difficult issues when viewed in the full context of higher education, that messy place where competition for research funds, recognition from one's peers and so on can mean nailing one's colours to

particular masts as a matter (flag?) of convenience. Yet, for Animation (and a good many other knowledge areas, not least Film and Media Studies), the weakly classified route seems to be the most fruitful one to explore. The central dilemma to be addressed – one in which Bernstein was very interested – was how the strong classification mindset tends to reproduce particular hegemonic discourses and practices. In other words, if the general tendency is to see knowledge areas as existing in a strongly classified relationship – where disciplines are separated from each other – then very often only certain (kinds of) answers will be sought and legitimated. This is because only certain people are seen as able to answer those questions.

Mark Langer has addressed some of these issues in relation to Animation in his essay 'The End of Animation History' (available online). The central focus of this short polemical piece (a paper delivered at one of the Society for Animation Studies conferences) is the way that the distinction between animation and live action has dissolved to such an extent that we need to rethink the ways we approach both of them as objects of study (indeed, approaching them 'both', i.e. as distinct objects, is part of the problem). Taking Francis Fukuyama's book *The End of History and the Last Man* as his starting point, Langer develops the argument and applies it to Animation. As Langer points out though:

I'm not here today to propose that in the traditional division between live-action and animation, animation has won. Neither am I here to proclaim the victory of live-action by stating that animation as a practice is over.

His argument is that, if we accept that History consists of

distinctions or conflicts between competing systems . . . I am proposing that changes in technology have brought us to the point where it is possible to proclaim the end of animation history. By this I mean that we may have reached the end of a historical period where theorists and practitioners commonly conceived of animation as a distinct form of image generation defined by its opposition to live-action cinema, or in opposition to that which cannot be experienced by real-life people in the real world.

He goes on to (convincingly, in my view) explore the ways that animation and live-action can be seen to be converging. This is important for the current discussion, as Langer makes clear towards the end of his piece. He states:

The entire nature of the relationship between the animated image and the live, real-world spectator is something that is being renegotiated by technology, but that renegotiation is being ignored by scholars in animation studies in specific and film studies in general. [However, t]his is not to say that is being ignored by scholars elsewhere.

Although not said in so many words, Langer is pointing out how the *strong classification* of animation knowledge problems perhaps means that some very apposite answers are not being heard. This then calls for radical action – something he heralds with a fanfare and the rhetorical flourish borrowed from Fukuyama. We can no longer afford to look at 'Animation History' (and included here is 'Animation Theory' and all other variants) as a highly

specific (which is to say, strongly classified) knowledge area. People who are researching Animation can and should learn things from Philosophers, Engineers, those in Performance Arts, Computing, and so on. In short they should follow a pathway of weak classification, and listen to anyone who has something interesting to say on the matter. (And this will always be the ultimate test: is what someone is arguing coherent and of interest, rather than 'does this belong in Animation?' or whatever). These points echo the debate between Langer and Bradbury, discussed in Chapter 5. Such an approach is also characteristic of a more piecemeal approach to research, as suggested by Bordwell and Carroll (1996) for example. What I would suggest is that this approach needs to be developed in a way that foregrounds the *critical* potential of Animation: we can recognise the diverse material contexts in which Animation operates, but in tandem with this we need to also develop a critical perspective that can respond to this diversity. I return to the notion of critical practice below; for now, we need to offer an outline of how Animation operates as a 'community of practice' in Lave and Wenger's sense of the term, as this addresses the notion of diversity and how Animation-related teaching and learning can be usefully drawn together.

### **Animation as ‘legitimate peripheral participation’**

One of the key theoretical and practical considerations for anyone trying to offer an outline of Animation – as a mode of practice, a pedagogy, a knowledge area – is the ‘multi-sitedness’ I have addressed in Chapters 5 and 8 in particular. That is, how can we discuss a wide range of people, doing what can appear to be very diverse things, as if they constitute a coherent group? The answer to this question involves recognising that there *is* diversity (and contradiction) but concentrating on how particular participants interact with and coincide with one another in very specific material contexts. There will be occasions when people actively involved in different aspects of Animation will come into each other’s orbit. This may lead to one-off discussions, disputes and collaborations, or may lead to an ongoing/permanent engagement. The point is that the interaction and engagement is not a static thing or a simple ‘exchange’ but is something that is in flux and any learning and communication that occurs is ‘socially situated’. I am using this term in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) sense, and they explain the related term ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ as follows:

Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of the community of practice. A person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice (29).

In other words, people will orient themselves to specific knowledges by relating what *they* do and think to what *others* - perceived to be 'already *there*', 'in the know' – do and think. Lave and Wenger's underlying point is that *all* learning (not simply school-based 'teaching') is a social activity and we therefore need to grapple with social context in order to understand this. For Lave and Wenger all activity (potentially, at least) involves learning; I would suggest that they are correct in this assumption, but that for actual learning to take place there has to be some *critical reflection* on the activity and the fact that something is being learned. This of course takes us back to critical practice as the way forward. In terms of Animation it is easy to discern how Lave and Wenger's concepts are useful. We can here refer back to the figure in Chapter 5 which showed a diagram of 'nodes' of Animation activity, with concentric lines reverberating out from these points (see page 167). One of the things I suggested in that chapter was that certain activity might be 'central' to one specific inquiry, yet peripheral to another. How it is viewed depends on the relative position of who is viewing it, and the activities in which they are engaged. To rephrase this in a way that makes it more germane to the current point, someone's engagement with Animation might well be deemed 'peripheral' by certain others, until there comes a time when (due to specific socio-historical circumstances) that engagement moves to become more 'central'. As Lave and Wenger make clear, 'peripheral' and 'central' are of course relative terms, not concrete ones, and it is the dialectical relationship between participants and



contexts that produce meaning. As they say: 'agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other' (33).

For example, a classically trained cel animator will have close connections to those who work in the same area, but a particular project might bring them into collaboration with animators working in other forms of animation, such as computer rendering, direct animation, or claymation. As they move away from 'their' specific community and interact more with the 'other' community, working practices will be questioned, challenged, may become entrenched, and so on.<sup>1</sup> In terms of Animation and its relationship to other knowledge areas, people's engagement with its teaching and learning, and so on, we can see a similar thing going on. For instance, as one researches particular areas, one will encounter and engage with different 'communities of practice' or nodes of Animation inquiry. The teaching and researching of Animation in classical Hollywood ostensibly requires a radically different approach and set of 'collaborators' than does Animation's application to the development of new techniques in Sports Science. However, while these two clearly represent very different 'communities of practice' in Lave and Wenger's meaning of the term, they are both engaging with Animation. And, crucially, I would suggest that Animation's multi-faceted character is what needs to be further explored by drawing out the way it links apparently unrelated communities of practice. So, in this example, a fairly traditional 'Film Studies'-inflected approach to

Animation and a Sports Science approach to Animation appear, on the surface, to have very little common ground (apart, that is, from their use of/interest in Animation). Yet I would argue that the commonalities not only go much deeper than they appear, but that this common ground is precisely the terrain on which we need to build. Thus, debates about realism and representation in Hollywood cartoon animation might take us into an analysis of naturalistic drawing styles, studios' use of live action film to help artists capture 'natural' movement, and use of devices such as the rotoscope. At the same time, the Sports Scientist might be examining how motion capture devices and chronophotography can help them in their research. The underlying questions being asked by these two apparently unrelated communities of practice are actually very similar – to do with the clear and accurate 'capturing' of motion via specific Animation techniques – and, despite their differences (indeed, I would maintain, *because* of them) there is a lot to be learned from a critical dialogue between the two. In this respect, Animation has the potential to usefully collapse some of the boundaries that still exist between broadly 'Arts' and 'Science' orientations. Indeed, the role of technology makes these debates all the more interesting, and I shall return to this below in the discussion of Animation's use of computer technology, and my references to the new facility at Brunel, the BitLab<sup>2</sup>. For now, we need only keep in mind that apparently stable knowledge areas or disciplines should be more accurately thought of as interacting communities of practice: they may overlap a great deal or not at

all; they may have practitioners who collaborate a lot or rarely. What is certain is that it is in the process of actively engaging with different contexts that one learns anything. It therefore follows that knowledge is produced about something by critically (re-)evaluating what that something is, how it relates to its (many) contexts, and so on.

### **Animation and critical practice**

Mike Wayne (2001) has developed a useful typology of cultural practitioners, which can clearly be applied to animation. As he says, his aim is to explore 'different modes and ambitions of being self-conscious about what it means to understand cultural production' (30). By this he means there are different extents to which one can be 'self-conscious' about one's work, existing on an overlapping continuum, but characterised by attention to specific domains, namely the 'process of production, the text itself and the context of production and consumption' (ibid.). At one end of this continuum is the *reflexive* practitioner, who is able to reflect on the production process. The *theoretical* practitioner, on the other hand, tends to dwell on the importance of the text as the site of meaning. As Wayne points out, though, 'being able to discuss how an editing sequence constructs meaning is not the same as being able to situate the text within a broader context of power' (ibid.). This brings us to the most desirable form of practitioner - and the most difficult to produce and sustain - the *critical* practitioner. They are 'able to interrogate the politics of representation. This

requires a movement from the text . . . to context (31).

It seems clear from the wealth of points raised in email exchanges with colleagues engaged in Animation that Wayne's typology is especially useful. Furthermore, I think that the way that the relationship between practice and theory in Animation is characterised makes some of the problems and issues he alludes to even more important. This is not to deny that the practice-theory debates are alive and well, and a vital part of teaching in film and video courses. Wayne's article stresses this (as does the work of Lindahl-Elliott) and I do not disagree. My point is simply that these debates appear to be even more important within Animation than they do elsewhere. I think this is to do with the way that Animation is often subsumed within 'other' theoretical or disciplinary structures. Animation's 'closeness' to film and other media has meant that the theoretical paradigms applied to these other areas are often applied to Animation, without first fully thinking through how Animation's theory and practice might inform *them*.

It is certainly the case that the categories Wayne suggests can overlap, or rather, that a person can occupy different positions according to their conditions of practice at any one moment. To go back to a point raised earlier, I think we can take Wayne's typology one step further by stating that there can be a high degree of *mobility* in how people engaged with

Animation might be defined and define themselves. For instance, there are a considerable number of people whose teaching of animation, for one reason or another, seems to fall into the reflexive practitioner category. In other words, they concentrate on the production process and particularly 'the *technology* of cultural production' (30, emphasis added). The importance of technological developments to Animation has been addressed in preceding chapters, and is something I shall return to below. My point here would be to stress that the discourse of many courses tends to be instrumentalist in nature – another way to put this would be to say that these courses are more or less vocational in the way they concentrate on the mastering of techniques and technology. Indeed, the technology is often seen as the *main* selling point of the courses.

Despite the fact that an Animation teacher might well fall into the reflexive practitioner category in terms of their day to day teaching, it is evident (again, from email discussion group exchanges) that many of them are also acutely aware of debates and issues that would seem to be the preserve of theoretical and critical practitioners. For example, one email respondent states 'conceptually, I feel that Animation Studies means the study of animation, inclusive of both theory and practice. What I do professionally is teach animation practice'. This is an example of the tension noted above – i.e. that someone might have a set of ideas ('conceptually...') about something, yet be required to do only one *part of* that something in

the course of their (educational) job. Also evident from this comment is the discourse of a 'profession'; that there are certain duties and responsibilities that someone in this position must fulfil. This is essentially revisiting some of the points made above about the second category in my tentative typology. Namely, that someone could have a view about what constitutes Animation, yet that view might not (be allowed to) feature in their actual teaching. Someone might personally be a highly sophisticated critical practitioner in Wayne's sense of the term, yet they recognise the pragmatic dimension of their teaching, and this will mean that their teaching is more or less reflexive (again, in Wayne's sense of this term, which is to say, reflecting predominantly on the production process, and the related technological issues and debates).

It certainly seems to be the case that the concerns of a reflexive practitioner feature in a lot of animation courses. But they are often in tension with the impulse towards being a more critical practitioner. Evidence of this can be seen in a recent extended debate in the Animation Journal discussion group about the role of computer technologies in animation courses. There will always be a tendency towards the fetishisation of technology in those courses that are predominantly merely reflexive, simply because what is being reflected upon is the production process (rather than, as Wayne argues, the broader theoretical and contextual dimensions). A question posted by a member of the group (actually a dissertation working

title) prompted a discussion of the role of computer technology. The question was 'Are computers in danger of putting "the cart before the horse" in relation to human resource training in the animation industry?' A lively discussion ensued, with a consensus seeming to form around the idea that knowing the 'basics' is more important, and should be seen as a prerequisite for using any form of computer technology. One contributor states:

I find the cart and horse analogy is accurate since there is a worship of technology and a suspicion of anything 'artistic' in a great many computer animation courses . . . Fortunately there are students who are aware of the disproportionate emphasis on technology and who have honed their 'traditional' skills.

The general thrust seems to be that 'the horse' ('creativity') must go before, or lead, 'the cart' (the computer technology). The important thing is then seen to be a careful and considered reflection on how the new technology impacts upon the 'traditional' way of doing things.

What is missing to a great degree here though is anything that moves the debate beyond the merely 'reflexive' level. The fact is, a majority of the contributors simply discuss the new technology in a fairly simplistic 'is it better than what we had previously?' type way (with most reaching a conclusion of 'no, not really', or rather, 'no, not without *building upon* what we had previously, rather than *replacing* it'). There is little theorising of the broader contextual issues at stake. One contributor edges towards this

important ground though:

There is a very strong pressure (from students and institutions) for animation curricula which focus mostly on technology. I think this is in part a consequence of how difficult 3D technology still is for most students. It is also because it is more difficult to assess and quantify the artistic aside of animation than the technical aspects. I don't like the cart and horse analogy, because it implies that one thing necessarily comes before the other or dominates. I think that you will find that the best schools always include both, and they walk side by side. You don't find architects debating if their students should learn either to make buildings stand or be expressive – both are fundamental.

This contribution certainly makes some interesting points, not least stating that the analogy used suggests that one part of the equation is actually 'driving' the other. I suppose if we were to extend the analogy, we could think of the horse as creativity and the cart as the technology (whether this is computer technology, as it is being debated here, or pen and paper which, lest we forget are a form of technology too), but add that the practitioner will usually be seated in the cart and drive/control it. Not only that, but they will drive/control the technology by actively using their creativity. This reformulation places *human agency* back in the frame: this is something which is in danger of being effaced entirely (by people who see the technology as the main driving force), or talked about in, to my mind, insufficient terms (i.e. couching it only in terms of 'creativity' or 'artistry', which can tend to imply a transcendental realm, where only people with the requisite 'artistic' temperament can comment on things). The cart, in this analogy, is a *vehicle*, so of course it has to be guided somewhere. But a lot of people in this debate were talking as if merely placing the horse and cart



in the 'correct' positions was all that was needed, and forgot that both horse and cart are nothing without a real, human agent, actively bringing both creativity and technology under control of their *practice* (under specific conditions).

To rephrase the above bluntly: the creativity and the technologies that allow the expression of that creativity must be seen as existing in a dialectical relationship. This sees neither one as 'dominant' or 'prior' to the other (falling into either a technologically determinist trap, or one that sees artistry as 'transcending' material conditions), but recognises that they feed off one another. Developments in computer technology for example have produced a good deal of poor animation,<sup>3</sup> where the tendency has been to hope that the 'flashiness' of the new technology will distract. However, it is vital to note that this is a factor whenever any new technology arrives on the scene (try watching a sound film from 1928-30!); it takes time for the technology's limits and possibilities to be mapped and used. This isn't helped by inevitable hyperbole that accompanies new technologies. For instance, it was often stated about the internet that 'in a few years, everyone will shop online'. Similarly, recent developments in digital video (DV) – an extremely cheap way to generate broadcast quality images that are eminently manipulable – have led some commentators to talk of the 'end of Hollywood'. Such statements are absurd and it only takes a cursory look at the evidence to see that any 'new' developments in an area *will* make some sort of impact, but that they will usually be adapted to or

subsumed by the existing power structures. So, Hollywood has invested in DV technology and projects, and lots of conventional shoppes [sic] are still filled with people buying things. Indeed, the new technologies often seem to be reduced to just *another* way for a few people to make lots of money . . .

Returning to the cart-and-horse analogy, one respondent offers this observation about special effects wizards, Industrial Light and Magic (ILM):

ILM used to have an example of bad animation from a fictional "Cee Student" which displayed everything bad, dumb, and ugly sent to ILM from students who think learning software (and not even all that thoroughly) is all that is required to be hired by a big 3D company. It was apparent from the fictional "reel" that the good people at ILM have had to look at a lot of crap, and as a result are resentful.

In an information packet that can be downloaded from ILM's web-site is the following regarding the position of character animation: "Character Animators are generally from a traditional hand-drawing 'cel' animation background who now take a computer modelled character or object and bring it to life via the computer."

Translation: horse first, cart second.

Here we have the view of one of the cutting-edge special effects and animation studios and it is clear that they see the technology as a means to an end and not the end in itself. What comes across loud and clear is that there is a bedrock of good practice (as seen in the reference to 'traditional hand-drawing 'cel' animation background') and that this is mobilised in the context of cutting-edge computer technology. This 'mobilisation' of a specific discourse in a new context is an example of what Bernstein would call 'recontextualisation', a term I shall return to below.

Technology's impact on animation, and the way that animation has had to change due to commercial pressures is therefore one of the key areas in need of analysis. This is something that Keith Bradbury has commented on (personal email to author: i.e. not part of the Animation Journal discussion group), and it raises important issues regarding the role of animation practitioners and scholars. Bradbury is exploring the question 'is animation a new skill or an old skill?' He continues:

Essentially I think I will argue that animation's identity has been fractured by its need to attach itself [and] locate its practice within other commercial industries. The educational neglect of animation . . . has further compounded animation's identity as either Disney or special effects or advertising. Advertising has special needs of animation thus contain[s] its use. Discrete courses on traditional animation practice are rare and thus for a generation of people animation is a skill that needs to be re-discovered not simply revived.

This email is useful as he points to how a knowledge area and its related practices can be impacted upon by social/material forces. Bradbury is implicitly arguing that the emergence of specific courses, where training will be at the forefront, is because of shifts in the perceived function and uses of animation (as a set of textual artefacts). This could be characterised as a 'we need more people who can . . .' approach, which is to say a form of instrumentalism. This has the effect of further impoverishing the pedagogic and epistemological underpinnings of the knowledge area, as it is seen increasingly as 'training' for either (say) 'Disney or special effects or advertising'. Also interesting is the contention that an arena such as advertising, having a role for animation to play, tends to try and keep

animation playing that role, and therefore itself has a role in defining what animation actually *is*. This is a similar argument to that of Thompson (1980) and Ward (2000) on the place of animation within an institutional structure such as Hollywood – that is, it does X well, so it should *only* do X.

The key point in the email is ‘that animation’s identity has been fractured by its need to attach itself [and] locate its practice within other commercial industries’. This is something that really warrants extra thought – the idea that a cultural practice can be ‘fractured’ in this manner. It also adds fuel to the fire of thinking about how all of these theoretical musings can be related to actual material conditions, something I return to below in my discussion of Brunel University’s BitLab. It is a point that goes some of the way to explaining why some people working in Animation might have a personal view that would make them fit into the critical practitioner category, but that they recognise the ‘reality’ (in the neo-liberal economist’s sense of the term) of their material conditions of practice, and this results in them playing out the role of reflexive practitioner. As I have tended to argue throughout this chapter, the reflexive practitioner, in the sense I am using it, is likely to be someone who thinks long and hard about the technology and tools at their disposal, but does not take that thinking the one (or more) step(s) further to actually critique their conditions of practice and the wider power structures in which they operate. This is why the notion of ‘critical practice’ is crucial for Animation: it needs to offer a ‘critique’ in order to

define itself, but also in order to negotiate its 'place' in relation to the reconfiguring digital technologies and aesthetics.

The new facility at Brunel University called BitLab was developed initially as an Electronic and Computer Engineering facility to help with teaching and research into Multimedia. Recent and ongoing developments have explored the ways in which the facility could be used to increase the connections between Arts- and Technology-based teaching and research. At present the BitLab deals with a great deal of animation-related work, but the vast majority falls under the umbrella of 'science' in the sense that it is scientific applications that use animation (engineering applications, systems analysis, computer modelling, and so on). However, there are clear applications for other knowledge areas to exploit, whether they are Performance Studies, Film and Media Studies, Robotics, or even Biology, Sports Science, and the like. My point here would be that what connects these diverse knowledge areas is Animation. These 'communities of practice' are engaging with Animation on some level, and this is what can give us some critical purchase on both the communities and Animation as social phenomena. I have already outlined (in Chapter 5) the ways in which Animation should be considered a 'discursive' field, operating in a number of places. What we see happening in a facility such as BitLab is Animation as a potential *catalyst* for the critical practice I have referred to above. In other words, we have a situation where a variety of disciplinary knowledges

are coming together, in a context where they have traditionally been separate: the arts-science-technology interface at Brunel is something that is still in the process of becoming established. The common ground that teachers, researchers and practitioners are finding is Animation: whether it is issues of digital performance, 3D rendering, how new technology impacts upon narrative and more 'traditional' time-based media, the predictive power of modelling programmes, the use of motion capture devices for a plethora of reasons, all of these applications are concerned with Animation. As well as underlining the reasons why a sense of critical practice is important, therefore, this also means we have to attend to the notion of 'recognition' and 'community' as outlined in Chapter 8. As 'old' disciplinary boundaries are transgressed, we need a way of understanding and critically evaluating what is happening and the social uses to which such practice is being put (hence the need for *critical* practice), and we also need to be able to map and predict specific points of contact (hence the need for a theory of academic community in the face of such apparent diversity). Again, Lave and Wenger's conceptual framework is useful, as it outlines questions of community, but more specifically addresses these notions of 'centrality', 'peripherality', and what happens when the 'new' meets the 'old'.

As noted above, different tendencies and skills within Animation can come into conflict with each other (e.g. the notion of 'traditional' drawing skills and cutting-edge technology supposedly 'replacing' them). It is also

the case, as Bradbury suggests, that Animation as a (set of) practice(s) has had to 'attach and locate itself' within a range of other contexts. This brings us full-circle to Bernstein, and his concept of 'recontextualisation': this refers to when and how specific pedagogic discourses are relocated and transformed by their use in other contexts. So, the teaching of particular filmmaking or animating skills will be inflected differently in different courses: the 'same' skill will be 'recontextualised' according to whether it is being taught in a vocational training course or a theoretically-inclined course, in a film—related course, or a multimedia-related course. As Wayne's typology of practitioners makes clear, the 'critical' practitioner is someone who is able to identify and reflect upon the occasions when such 'recontextualisation' is occurring. The fact that Animation exists at the conjunction of a very wide range of discourses – about film, philosophy, technology, aesthetics, individual expression, and so on – means that it *takes and recontextualises* those discourses, but also that it, in turn, is *taken and recontextualised*. A critical reflection on what Animation is and what it might be - its conditions of practice and the many different contexts in which it operates – therefore requires that we understand how specific knowledges are 'placed' by and in relation to other discourses, and how these discourses are in turn 'placed' by Animation. It is this dialectic that is at the heart of Animation and all of the knowledges that it has a hand in producing.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be stressed that communities of practice can of course be a negative force in the sense that people can retreat into them, if they feel 'threatened'. The debate about technology and animation is a case in point, where some practitioners denigrate technology as a way to feel safer in their own way of doing things. Such behaviour cuts both ways, with some practitioners who have fully embraced new technology denigrating more traditional approaches as old-fashioned, say. The key is to find a way of integrating these two positions so that they critically reflect upon one another.

<sup>2</sup> BitLab is the 'brand name' for the Brunel University Information Technology Laboratory.

<sup>3</sup> The idea of 'poor' animation is of course a value judgment that requires explanation and contextualisation. At various points during animation's history, particular animated forms have been perceived as 'poor' or substandard. It should go without saying, of course, that such a judgment is always in relation to something else, and that mythical Golden Ages or Classical Periods are often 'retro-fitted' so that an argument about the 'poor' quality of a certain kind of animation is made more credible. A good example is so-called 'limited animation', most associated with Hanna-Barbera's television output. Certainly, the productions from the 1950s and 1960s period of television animation were very different from theatrical cartoons, and their 'limited' range of movements, colours etc can seem impoverished when compared directly with classic Disney, Warner or MGM cartoons. However, as recent scholars have argued, it is vital to see these television animations in their production/exhibition contexts, and to understand them on this basis (see Mittel 2003). As noted in the main text, the idea of 'poor' animation in relation to debates about technology, is usually invoking a lack of 'traditional' animation ability (i.e. the ability to draw, or the ability to move an audience with storytelling and character construction), and suggesting that a fetishization of technology occurs in place of this lack of ability.



## **Conclusion**

### **Animation: theoretical and pedagogic transformation**

It is in the nature of a research project such as this – extending over a number of years – that things change. But if there is one thing that any reader should take away from this work it is that that is an unavoidable and thoroughly desirable thing. The transformative and progressive aspects of Animation as a form – its playfulness, its blurring of boundaries, its ability to challenge - are something I wish to see developed and understood in relation to its theoretical and pedagogic dimension. How Animation relates to ‘other’ knowledge areas has been one of the key areas to be analysed; but this has been shown to be a problematic (set of) relationship(s) in the sense that a straightforward, commonsense ‘disciplinary’ way of conceiving knowledge cannot do justice to Animation. Instead, we need to think discursively, examining Animation for the ways that it enters into a ‘dialogue’ with apparently separate knowledge areas, or is mobilised in such a way as to offer room for critique.

The question of ‘critical’ practice has been a thread running through the thesis. From the epistemological questions raised in the opening chapter, through the points made about how knowledge is classified, to the more specific arguments about Animation as a form of knowledge, as a practice, and as a community, the main underlying argument has been that it is only

by critically engaging with terms, definitions and material contexts that we can ever hope to achieve any knowledge.

The critical and the discursive need to be seen for what they are: political positions from which to offer analysis of how things actually are, and how they might be. Animation is rightly celebrated for its ability to show us worlds that we might not otherwise apprehend; we would also do well to remember that this never simply means 'fantasy' worlds, but points to Animation's ability to make us think critically about the *underlying* relationships of the real material contexts in which we find ourselves.

It is important to recognise that Animation functions in a wide range of contexts, overlapping, intermingling, in flux. As noted in Chapter 9, it is useful to think about Animation as a set of inter-related activities which, following Lave and Wenger's idea of situated learning, can be termed 'legitimate peripheral participation'. In other words, what appear to be diffuse and even completely unrelated research, teaching and learning activities are actually discourses that can and do 'come into play' with one another under specific circumstances. The recent explosion into research and teaching on videogames is a case in point. Here we have an enormous range of research questions and methodologies, taking on board philosophy, computing, physics, mechanics, film studies, theories of performance, ethical debates about violence, theories of narrative and so

on. The thread that connects all of these is Animation. But it is not enough for us merely to recognise that there are nodes of Animation-related inquiry being conducted in a wide variety of 'places' – the discursive dimension needs to be developed so that the overlaps and common ground (and also the disputes and contradictions) between these nodes are fully recognised. Inevitably, this means disrupting some apparent boundaries – between art, science, technology – and critiquing entrenched views about 'disciplinarity' (and its simplistic variants such as 'interdisciplinarity', 'cross-disciplinarity', and the like).

Furthermore, such a critique also means that we need to re-evaluate how people constitute themselves as a 'community of practice' (to borrow Lave and Wenger's term). The argument has been that people act within and respond to the 'social situatedness' of their knowledge area, constructing a meaningful identity in relation to others, via the notion of 'recognition'. This explains why some knowledges – with Animation being the prime example, in my view – appear to be so diffuse: they constitute a set of *strategic* positions by practitioners and educators, making connections with others (or *denying* them) within specific material contexts. For example, many Animation courses are constructed around a training or skills discourse, with the underlying pedagogic framework being that Animation is something that you learn about by *doing*, and that you learn about in order *to do*. Such instrumentalism is part-and-parcel of the 'real

world' or 'pragmatic' application of Animation education: learning *about* Animation means learning *to animate*, and applying those skills in the specific context(s) in which they are needed. As Keith Bradbury pointed out in Chapter 9, Animation has become 'fractured' by its need to locate itself as a practice within a wide range of contexts. However, my argument is that re-evaluating/reframing this 'fracture' – via the notion of critical practice – as a potential *strength* of Animation is the way forward. Rather than trying to counter the 'fractured-ness' by retreating to a position where Animation is talked about as a 'thing-in-itself', with its 'own' specific characteristics and pedagogic procedures, we need to retain a sense of its multi-situatedness, as that is what is most interesting and potentially progressive about it. An essentialist, recursive model of what Animation is and how we should teach it might be attractive in a *momentary* sense of wanting to stake Animation's claim as a vital aesthetic and political form. However, staking a claim in that way would be, as I say, a retreat from any radical potential that Animation has in the first place, to a position where Animation tries to behave like any 'other' discipline. Its strength lies in its perceived 'marginality', its 'multimodality', the way that it links together a vast range of different practices and theories. The answer is therefore not to try and *overcome* Animation's 'status' as a knowledge area but to more fully *critically evaluate* it.

The points I have made regarding materialist hermeneutics and discursivity need to be reiterated in the light of this. It is crucial that we understand that the 'discursive' here is not the indeterminate shifting sands of post-modern thought, where there are many discourses competing to be heard, and their 'competition' is held up as an example of some vague cultural diversity, where all is 'relative'. 'Discursive' as I have used the term is recognising that dialogue is occurring, but that it is not necessarily an equal exchange and that although individual and group agency is important and needs to be carefully thought through, it is meaningless unless related to the complexities of material contexts. The point of talking about 'discourse' is to get to grips with how real people talk to each other about what they do, and thereby move towards *transforming* the people, their contexts, and the relations between the two. Again, to give a current example: the ongoing work at Brunel University, where arts, technology and science are all meeting under the rubric of Animation, offers an instance of how previously isolated and fragmented 'disciplinary' voices are being discursively linked in a specific context. The end result will be, I hope, a transformation of not only Animation's place within the academy, but also a critical re-evaluation of those existing knowledge areas and the people who practise them.

## **Appendix: A selection of animation-related courses**

The course documents contained in this Appendix are just a few examples of animation-related education material. Clearly, they offer a mere snapshot of the kinds of courses available, and are in no way meant to suggest a 'representative' sample. What they do offer is some idea of the structure, language, aims and objectives and presumed outcomes of certain courses, and reveal the commonalities and divergences between different courses. As such, they should point to gaps and areas that require further research. Some of these documents are referred to in the main text at appropriate points.

The courses are on the following pages:

A1 BRADLEY	307-309
A2 FURNISS	310-318
A3 MITTEL	319-328
A4 NEWPORT	329-351
[A4.1 – A4.4]	
A5 PATRICK	352-355
A6 ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART	356-366
A7 SCHWARTZ	367-370
A8 COURSE WEBSITES	371-372

## A1: BRADLEY

343 C

History of Animation

# COURSE SYLLABUS

Spring, 2003 (March 3, 2003 – April 28, 2003)

INSTRUCTOR: Robert Bradley

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OFFICE:	TUI Class Room or SW Graphix Office: 2306 W. Galbraith Rd, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor
OFFICE HOURS:	6:00 - 9:00 or 9:30-5:00 Monday & Friday
OFFICE PHONE:	522-4543 (leave a message after 4 rings; please speak loudly, slowly and clearly)
E-MAIL ADDRESS:	rbradley@swgraphix.net (school & office) rbradley3@cinci.rr.com (weekends and evenings)
WEB PAGE:	<a href="http://www.swgraphix.net">http://www.swgraphix.net</a>
COURSE PAGE:	<a href="http://www.swgraphix.net/TUI/animation.html">http://www.swgraphix.net/TUI/animation.html</a>
CLASS HOURS:	6:00 –9:00 Monday Evening

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### A. DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the learner to the history of animation. The course will discuss animation from its origins of sequential still images through its development into the realm of 3D animation. The course will present an overview of the concepts, technologies, and practices.

After you have completed this course, you will have a better understanding of what animation is, where it came from and possibly, where it is going.

### B. ORGANIZATION

This is an in-class website enhanced course. The in-class aspect of the class will be discussion driven based on the course readings, personal experiences and possible applications.

The website aspect of the course is to present an avenue for supplemental readings, online discussions and examples of animation.

There may be class projects throughout the course in order to assist understanding. Written assignments will be due at the midpoint of the semester and within the last week of the semester.

History of Animation is not designed as an how-to create animation, however, the course will give overviews regarding different techniques and tools used in the creation of animation.

### C. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Introduce Learners to the history of animation as an art form and a means of communication.
- Help Learners understand what animation is, how animation began and the basic skills needed for creating animation.
- Introduce Learners to the different types of animation and their usages.
- Help Learners to see the application of animation tools and techniques in various work settings.

### D. COURSE TOPICS

The course will cover the following topics:

1. Definitions, considerations,
2. An Animation Chronology
3. Early Tools and Techniques
4. Popular/Widely Used Tools & Techniques
5. Currently Used Tools & Techniques
6. Movement & Storyboarding
7. Graphic Elements
8. Computers in Animation
9. 2D and 3D Animation
10. Gaming Animation
11. Entertainment Animation
12. Educational Animation

### E. TEXT AND Supplemental Reading

1. Required text: *The Animation Book (The New Digital Edition)* by Kit Laybourne
- Supplemental Reading:
    - *Chronology of Animation* (<http://www.public.iastate.edu/%7Erllw/chronint.html>)
    - *Animation Rules* (<http://animation.filmstv.ucla.edu/program/anihist.html>)
    - *History of Animation: The Early Years Before Disney* (<http://www-viz.tamu.edu/courses/viza615/97/spring/pjames/history/main.html>)
    - *A Capsule History of Anime* (<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue1.5/articles/patten1.5.html>)

### F. GRADING PLAN

Coursework will be weighted as follows:

1. Written Assignments	70%				
2. Participation			15%		
3. Attendance			15%		
	70%	+	30%	=	100%



## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There will be three major individual assignments. The Individual assignments are to be emailed to me as Microsoft Word attachments. Send the emails to [rbradley@swgraphix.net](mailto:rbradley@swgraphix.net)

The subject line is to be structured with your last name, the assignment and the date.

### **Bradley-Assignment 01-3/28/03**

Writing Assignment One (Due March 28, 2003):

One 3-5 page paper examining the role of animation in society throughout its history. This is an opinion paper. The paper will be graded on clarity of thought, appropriate examples to support your position and grammar. Any references quoted must be cited.

Writing Assignment Two (Due No Later Than April 25, 2003):

One 5-10 page paper selecting three major events in the history of animation\* and examine their use of technology in connection with the technological changes of that time. Include drawings, clipart, diagrams, etc. to support your discussion. The paper will be graded on clarity of thought, appropriate examples to support your position and grammar. Any references quoted must be cited.

\* An example of a major event could be the collaboration of Disney Studios and Pixar Studios

\*\*Note: This is not a class that requires dates and names to be memorized. The focus is on understanding animation and its overall place in technology and society in an historical context.

### ATTENDANCE:

Attendance will be graded as follows:

No absences (Perfect Attendance)	A
Two absences (Good Attendance)	B
Four absences (Fair Attendance)	C
Five or more absences (Poor Attendance)	F

Absence for which *advance* notice is given by phone or in person will not be figured in the attendance grade.

Please keep in mind that this is an eight-week class. Attendance is important, but participation and discussion makes the class fun and exciting.

## A2: FURNISS

Winter 2003

CMPA 223 – The History of 2D Animation

T/Th 9:00 – 11:30 in Montgomery 207

**Department:** Computer Art

**Telephone:** 525-6445

**Office Location:** Hamilton 5

**Course Website:** <http://aim.scad.edu>

**Professor:** Maureen Furniss, Ph.D.

**E-mail:** [mfurniss@scad.edu](mailto:mfurniss@scad.edu)

**Office Hours:** M/W 11:30 - 12 and 2:30 - 3:15;

T/Th 2:30 - 3:15 and by appointment

**Prerequisites:** CMPA 100 Survey of Computer Art Applications or CMPA 110 Advanced Survey of

Computer Art Applications and ARTH 110 Survey of Western Arts II.

**Course Description:** This course provides an historical overview of animation produced throughout the world in its many forms. The central focus is on 2D (non-electronic) animation, though 3D (non-electronic) animation and computer-generated animation will be discussed to a small degree. Both experimental and mainstream studio animation will be discussed in depth.

**Course Objectives and Purpose:** Students will be familiar with influential studios, artists and animated productions created throughout history. They will also be aware of significant issues that have impacted the creation and reception of animation, including political, social, and economic forces. By viewing a wide range of production techniques shown in class, students are encouraged to broaden their own artistic practices.

**Skills to Master:** Students will view and critically discuss works screened in class. They will also respond to animated productions in short written papers and a group presentation. Students also demonstrate their knowledge of animation principles through the creation of a flipbook and a puppet-related project.

**Required Text:** Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics, by Maureen Furniss

**Recommended Texts:** Cartoons, by Giannalberto Bendazzi; Before Mickey, by Donald Crafton; Hollywood Cartoons, by Michael Barrier; Of Mice and Magic, by Leonard Maltin

**Required Materials:** Notebook, paper, internet access and related hardware/software, research sources, materials for flipbook and puppet, and materials of the student's choosing for a possible in-class presentation.

**Grading Opportunities:** 100 possible points total

- 10 pts. Class participation, including participation in threaded discussions online
- 15 pts. Paper: 4 - 5 page aesthetic analysis or historical research paper on an individual or studio
- 20 pts. Flipbook project and discussion paper
- 20 pts. Puppet project and discussion paper
- 5 pts. Notebook, including field-trip/screening report
- 10 pts. Midterm 1
- 10 pts. Midterm 2
- 10 pts. Midterm 3

### Class Participation

Students are expected to participate in each class meeting by arriving on time to class, remaining attentive for the entire class period, and actively contributing to discussion of films. Students who are dozing in class or disturbing the professor or other students by talking during lectures or screenings will be asked to leave and marked absent for the period. Students are expected to participate in threaded discussions on the course website as well.

#### Flipbook Project (and discussion paper)

For this assignment, you will create a 50-page flipbook in which you will explore issues related to animation, such as incremental movement and metamorphosis. The flipbook must be accompanied by a 1 - 2 page paper that discusses your creative process: the inspiration for your subject, your production process, and the concepts that are explored in your work, as well as any general comments you would like to include. Start planning early; late work is unacceptable and this project probably will take longer than you think.

- Any type of paper can be used, but typing or photocopy paper is too light to flip effectively. Index cards or other material of a similar weight are good, but can be dense and difficult to use it on a light table. I recommend refill paper for sketch pads, available in Ex Libris bookstore. They come with holes already punched in the side. An 8 x 5.5 inch refill can be cut in half to create a 4 x 5.5 flipbook.
- Books are to range from 2 inches by 3 inches at the smallest to approximately 4 inches by 6 inches at the largest.
- Generally, the books will be rectangular, though any workable shape may be used.
- Any technique can be used to create images (drawing, painting, stamping, cut-outs, photos, photocopies, etc.).
- Keep in mind that a portion of the pages will not be visible due to the density of the paper near the staple/string, so your work should appear on 2/3 of the sheet (keeping the 1/3 near the staple blank).
- Keep in mind that you have about 3 seconds of 'flipping', so stories cannot be too complex.
- Work from the bottom to the top; your first image should be placed at the bottom of the stack.
- Include a few blank pages at the ends, so that the last part of your action can be flipped more easily.
- The placement of drawings can be checked if you set cards on a light table. Inexpensive small light tables (about \$8) are available from Walmart's craft section (and possibly other craft stores) or a piece of glass with a light placed underneath works, if you are careful. Place a blank card over a card that has a drawing on it, then you can judge more easily where the next image should be placed.
- Remember that an image by itself may look awkward, but may work when flipped in the sequence of other images. Sometime movement will cause distortion or blurring of the "in between" frames.
- Movements must be made on all three axes: the x-, y- and z-axes (left/right, up/down and near/far).
- You can draw representational or abstract figures, but be sure your shapes metamorphose to some extent.
- Do not include 'cutaways' from the main action to other angles or content as though this were a storyboard or live-action film; they will not read properly when the flipping occurs. You should animate one continuous image and action for all fifty pages.
- Include a cover with a title and your name on it. The presentation of your cover counts toward your grade.
- After "drawing" is complete, flip books should be secured at one end with string or other material to tie them tightly. Consider how you will bind pages BEFORE you begin the drawing process.
- Do not forget to turn in your 1-2 page paper with it.

#### Puppet-related Project (and discussion paper)

Students will design and create a finger or hand puppet or a rod puppet (silhouette or 3D) that reflects historical concepts related to puppet theater and puppet animation as discussed in class. Materials used to create the puppets should reflect consideration of the puppet's character. A one- to two-page paper will discuss the creative considerations going into the puppet's design as well as the personality/character portrayed by the puppet in relation to the materials used and its overall design. It is acceptable to submit recreations of traditional puppets. Modern/abstract/object-oriented puppet designs also are acceptable.

A finger or hand puppet can be designed in any manner, though it should be detailed in its construction. See examples shown in class. Consider such design issues as whether it will be a one- or two-finger puppet, a hand puppet operated by thumb and pinkie finger in arms or thumb and other fingers operating a mouth. Consider how personality will be conveyed through material choice and expression.

Steps in creating a silhouette rod puppet (a 3D rod puppet is similar, but made of material other than black cardboard)

1. Draw your puppet to scale, including all hinged body parts attached to torso. Indicate where holes will be cut to accommodate the brad hinge and where the dowels will be attached to the hands. This can be done on any kind of paper, as you are only making a drawn guide.
2. When you are satisfied with the result, lay a piece of tracing paper over the sketch, first outlining the torso completely. Overlay another section of tracing paper and trace the attached body parts. Be sure you include room on the torso and other body parts for overlapping areas, where hinges will be created. The amount of overlap depends on the size of your character. You should cut out the pattern and make sure the parts will work properly when they are hinged, so that the 'overlap' doesn't show when the arm, leg or other jointed piece is rotated.
3. When you are satisfied with your pattern pieces, you are ready to cut out your puppet from black posterboard, if you are creating a silhouette puppet, or other material for a 3D puppet. Place white carbon paper on top of the posterboard, carbon side down (toward the posterboard). Place your pattern pieces on top of the carbon paper, anchoring them with some funtak or other adhesive. Trace around the edges of the pattern with a pencil or other pointed object, so that the carbon paper below transfers onto the posterboard. Remove the pattern and tracing paper and cut out your puppet's body parts.
4. Details can be cut out using an knife or scalloped scissors to give effects to the edges. Colored plastic, lace or netting can be attached to the puppet where there are holes in the posterboard, so that a color or pattern will appear when light is shined through the puppet.
5. Hinging of body parts can be done in two ways. Brads can be used, but will tend to let light leak through and probably will not hold your elements strongly enough to keep them immobile after they are posed. Black thread and a fine needle will be less likely to leak light, but can be difficult to tie tightly; a drop of glue will help anchor the thread after knots have been tied on each side of the puppet. Consider using heavyweight upholstery thread or a full strand of embroidery floss.
6. Use 3 pieces of 14-16 gauge wire or 3 thin dowels to support the torso and to move the arms. The main control wire can be attached with masking tape or a glue gun, but your puppet will be more flexible if you through a bit of plastic tubing glued to the puppet horizontally. When the wire is bent at an angle and threaded through the tube (tying it off in a triangle shape), it is easier to keep the puppet flush against the screen. You can also use a dowel to support the torso of your puppet. A glue gun can be useful for anchoring the dowel support.
7. Install two wires or two dowels to the arms, so they can be moved.

The puppet must be accompanied by a 1 - 2 page paper that discusses your creative process: the inspiration for your subject in terms of puppet history and other factors, your production process, and your puppet's character, as well as any general comments you would like to include. Be prepared to present your puppet figure in class.

Term Paper Option 1: Critical Analysis Write a 4- to 5-page analytical essay comparing 2 works screened in class. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate an understanding of concepts discussed in class. In your paper, you must cover the following: image design, color, line (or texture for 3D), movement, sound, and structure. Employ terminology to identify the methods employed in the work and analyze how these techniques create meaning in the work. Use specific examples from the animated productions to illustrate your work, but do not include a detailed plot summary. An essay that only describes the content of the animated productions will not be satisfactory; analysis of content should be your focus. Turn in a filmography with your paper.

Term Paper Option 2: Historical and Critical Analysis Write a 4- to 5-page historical and critical essay employing 2 or more book or journal references in your work. If you use the Internet in addition to the book and journal resources, they must be very detailed and historically accurate; look for research sites and not promotional/company or fan sites. In your paper, include information about the origins of the productions and companies—or education/influences of the individuals—being researched. Do not include extensive plot summaries of productions. Turn in a filmography and bibliography with your paper.

Notebook Keep an organized notebook of materials handed out in class, reading and screening notes, lecture and discussion notes, research and paper -related materials, exams, flipbook materials and any other items pertaining to class content. Your notebook should be illustrated with images representing animated productions we study in class. Papers loosely organized in pockets of a folder or other informal container will be unsatisfactory. This notebook should serve as a reference for you after the course has been completed. It should not be integrated into a sketchbook containing notes on other courses or random illustrations. Along with content, presentation and organization are significant factors in grading.

#### Exams

The exams will be composed of short answer and essay questions. Each midterm will cover readings, lectures, discussions and screenings from the class meetings indicated on the syllabus. Makeup exams will not be given, except in the case of a documented personal illness or family emergency.

#### **Extra Credit - students can earn up to 5 extra credit points in one of two ways**

Option 1: using puppets designed for class, students (1 or 2 in a group) may create a short (under 3 minute) play. Creation of a stage is the responsibility of the students. Additional puppets can be employed (purchased ready-made is acceptable). Option 2: students may present material from their term paper in a 10- to 15-minute presentation to the class.

#### **Flipbook Evaluation Form**

BASIC REQUIREMENTS - All assignments must meet the following criteria:

- ☐ 50-page flip book (up to 100 pages allowed)
- ☐ 1 - 2 page paper that discusses your creative process, including
  - the inspiration for your subject
  - your production process
  - concepts that are explored in your work
  - general comments, including the student's overall experience of creating the flipbook
- ☐ Book ranges from 2 inches by 3 inches at the smallest to approximately 4 inches by 6 inches at the largest
- ☐ Metamorphosis evident

#### OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- 0. Not acceptable
- 1. Acceptable
- 2. Good
- 3. Very good
- 4. Outstanding

- ☐ Evidence that the student has attempted to apply the concepts of metamorphosis in his or her flipbook.
- ☐ Evidence that the student has explored concepts related to incremental movement.
- ☐ Evidence that the student has explored concepts related to movement on the x-, y- and z-axes.
- ☐ Student has made effective choices in terms of the form and content of the flipbook.

- \_\_\_ Flipbook is assembled in an appropriate manner (in aesthetic terms and to facilitate use).
- \_\_\_ Risks taken/evidence of experimentation and exploration of concepts.
- \_\_\_ The overall aesthetic effect of the flipbook, considering the limitations of the assignment and variations in students' backgrounds and abilities.
- \_\_\_ Paper is effective in demonstrating the following: how student planned and executed animation, the inspiration for the project, the student's knowledge of animation concepts and what the student gained from the experience.
- \_\_\_ Total evaluation of assignment, considering all of the above factors.

## **Puppet Evaluation Form**

BASIC REQUIREMENTS - All assignments must meet the following criteria:

- \_\_\_ completed, functional finger, hand, or rod puppet
- \_\_\_ 1 - 2 page paper that discusses your creative process
  - the inspiration for your subject in terms of puppet history and other factors
  - your production process
  - your puppet's character in relation to the materials used and overall design
  - general comments, including the student's overall experience of creating the puppet

## OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- 0. Not acceptable
- 1. Acceptable
- 2. Good
- 3. Very good
- 4. Outstanding

\_\_\_ Evidence that the student has explored styles presented in class and/or based on historical models.

\_\_\_ Puppet is assembled in an appropriate manner (in aesthetic terms and to facilitate use).

\_\_\_ Evidence that the student has attempted to create a puppet with a distinctive personality.

\_\_\_ Evidence that the student has used materials appropriate to the puppet's character.

\_\_\_ Risks taken/evidence of experimentation and exploration of concepts.

\_\_\_ The overall aesthetic effect of the puppet, considering the limitations of the assignment and variations in students' backgrounds and abilities.

\_\_\_ Paper is effective in demonstrating the following: the inspiration for your subject in terms of puppet history and other factors, the student's production process, the puppet's character in relation to the materials used and overall design, and what the student gained from the experience.

\_\_\_ Total evaluation of assignment, considering all of the above factors.

**Schedule of Classes:**

Class 1 (Jan 7): Animation Studies, Automata, Optical toys.  
Class 2 (Jan 9): Foundations of Animation Production. Read ch. 1 and 2.  
Class 3 (Jan 14): Alternatives in 2D Animation. Read ch. 3.  
Class 4 (Jan 16): Alternatives in 2D Animation.  
Class 5 (Jan 21): Image, Color, Line, and Movement. Read ch. 4.  
Class 6 (Jan 23): Sound and Structure. Read ch. 5.  
Class 7 (Jan 28): Disney Studio. Read ch. 6. Exam 1 (45 min) - over classes 1 - 5  
Class 8 (Jan 30): UPA and Limited Animation. Read ch. 7. Flipbook and 1-2 page flipbook paper due.  
Class 9 (Feb 4): 3D Animation. Read ch. 8.  
Class 10 (Feb 6): History of Puppetry in America. Midterm conferences.  
Class 11 (Feb 11): John Lasseter and New Technologies. Read ch. 9.  
Class 12 (Feb 13): Institutional Regulators. Read ch. 10.  
Class 13 (Feb 18): Cartoons in Wartime. Exam 2 (45 min) - over classes 6 - 11  
Class 14 (Feb 20): Animation Audiences. Read ch. 11. Puppet and 1-2 page puppet paper due.  
Class 15 (Feb 25): Issues in Representation. Read ch. 12.  
Class 16 (Feb 27): Abstract Animation. Read ch. 13.  
Class 17 (Mar 4): Anime. 4-5 page term paper due.  
Class 18 (Mar 6): In-class presentations (optional). Additional anime topics TBA.  
Class 19 (Mar 11): Turn in notebooks at beginning of exam. Exam 3 (45 min) - over classes 12 - 18.  
Class 20 (Mar 13): Individual meetings for return of papers, feedback and grades.

**Field Trip:** TBA. The field trip counts toward overall attendance and participation. Although not everyone can always make the field trip at the time and date planned, alternate activities will not be scheduled.

**Extra Help Sessions:** A sign up sheet for appointment times on a day TBA will be passed out in class. Extra help is also available via email and by appointment.

**Conference:** Midterm conferences will be held on Feb 6.

**Incomplete:** A grade of incomplete may be granted to students who have suffered serious personal illness or critical, emergency circumstances during the academic term, resulting in failure to complete all assignments by the end of the quarter. A student who has missed over 20% of the class sessions may not be eligible for an incomplete. **Documentation from a physician is required and must be attached to the petition for a temporary grade of incomplete.** Please see the college catalog for additional information on incompletes.

**Academic Honesty:** Under all circumstances, students are expected to be honest in their dealings with faculty, administrative staff, and fellow students. In speaking with members of the college community, students must give an accurate representation of the facts at hand. In class assignments, students must submit work that fairly and accurately reflects their level of accomplishment. Any work that is not a product of the student's own effort is considered dishonest. Students may not submit the same work for more than one class. A student may be suspended or expelled for academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Student Handbook for additional information regarding the policy on academic dishonesty.

**Grading Standards:** Below are the general grading standards employed. An evaluation form specifically for the flipbook project follows.

A = 90 - 100      EXCELLENT

1. Work shows in-depth independent research and development of original ideas.
2. All aspects of the assignment are addressed in the work.



3. Work is finished on time and presented in a neat, organized manner, free of spelling and grammatical errors.
4. Student articulates thorough awareness of course concepts and the works being examined.
5. Student is respectful of other students in the course; he or she is a good team worker and makes an outstanding contribution to the group as a whole.
6. Student clearly demonstrates a desire to meet and exceed course requirements.

B = 80 - 89 ABOVE AVERAGE

1. Work shows some research and development of ideas.
2. Most aspects of the assignment are addressed in the work.
3. Work is finished on time and presented in an organized manner.
4. Student articulates awareness of course concepts and the works being examined.
5. Student contributes to the group as a whole.

C = 70 - 79 AVERAGE

1. Work shows limited research and development of ideas.
2. Work is complete in terms of page requirements and content.
3. Work is presented neatly.
4. Student attends regularly, but makes little contribution to the course.

D = 60 - 69 BELOW AVERAGE

1. Work falls short in research and development of ideas.
2. Work is incomplete in terms of page requirements and/or content.
3. Student fails to demonstrate knowledge of course materials.
4. Student is irregular in attendance and/or disruptive in class.

F = 0 - 59 FAIL

1. Work shows no research and development.
2. Work is far short of page and content requirements.
3. Work is not turned in (all assignments must be completed in order to get credit for the course).
4. Students also can be failed for missing more than four class meetings, as explained in the attendance policy.

### **A3: MITTELL**

*Film Genres: Animated Film & Television*  
*FILM 4280 - Fall 2001, Professor Mittell*  
*Tues/Thurs 2:30 - 3:45, 303 General Classroom*

Dr. Jason Mittell	jmittell@gsu.edu
740 One Park Place	Office Hours: T/Th 4:00 - 5:00 & by
appointment	
(404) 463-9524	Communication Dept.: (404) 651-3200 /
fax 651-1409	

Animation has an unusual relationship to the rest of film and television - it's a crucial part of the history and success of these media, but is often ignored and culturally marginalized compared to other forms. This course turns a serious gaze onto animated film and television and looks to explore its role in media history, industry, audiences, aesthetics, and cross-cultural practice. We will explore such issues as: What exactly is animation? How might examine an animated film or television show? How has animation changed throughout its history? How have the film and television industries produced, distributed, exhibited, and marketed animation? Who is the "proper" audience for animation? What are its social effects? How does animation function regarding cultural representations, such as race, gender, sexuality, etc.? What are the differences between animation in America and Japan? What do new technologies hold for the future of animation?

The answers to many of these questions are not simple - and will not just be provided by the professor. This class is more of a group exploration into these questions, looking to understand animation in more detail and to see how it fits into your lives as media consumers (and potentially producers). Just because we're talking about animation - which tends to be regarded as a "simple" form of popular culture - don't expect that the course will be simple. Rather be prepared to launch into a serious, complex, and sophisticated topic that will hopefully challenge your thoughts about this supposedly "childish" form of mass media.

As an advanced level course, we will integrate history, criticism, and theory, while working through a significant amount of reading--much of it quite complex--throughout the semester. The course also has a strong writing component, with frequent reading reaction papers, a midterm essay, and a lengthy original research project,

focusing on an animated topic and set of specific issues of your choosing. A final essay exam will synthesize the readings throughout the semester. Students are also expected to be active participants in the course. Much of class time will be spent viewing animation and discussing it in relation to the readings. Additionally, outside screenings (both on video and in theaters) will be assigned will be considered as part of the course requirements.

**Prerequisites:** FILM 1010 and FILM 2700

*This syllabus is the general plan for this course - deviations may be necessary as the semester progresses.*

### ***Required Texts & Readings:***

#### **Books available at GSU Bookstore:**

Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation*, New York: Routledge, 1998.

Norman M. Klein, *7 Minutes: The Life & Death of the American Animated Cartoon*, New York: Verso, 1993.

Susan J. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, New York: Palgrave, 2001.

**Note:** If the GSU bookstores have run out of these titles, it is the student's responsibility to get access to a copy for assigned readings. All titles are on reserve at Pullen Library and easily available at both local and online bookstores.

#### **Reading Pack (labeled RP on your schedule) available at The Printshop, 6 Decatur Street**

All readings are required for this course - you must have your own copy of the readings to keep up with the course. Numerous books will be on reserve at Pullen Library to assist you with your own research projects - details on these texts will be available on the course WebCT page.

The WebCT page for this class will contain important information throughout the semester, as well as providing a place for student discussion and sharing information. It is an important facet of the course, and thus is **not optional**. Throughout the semester, all students are required to check WebCT for information and updates, as well as reading and contributing to online discussions. It is expected that each student will post at least two responses to class materials (readings, lectures, discussions, screenings, etc.) on WebCT discussion boards and at least two reactions to other student comments as well. Students who do not participate in WebCT discussions at this minimal level will be penalized in their participation grades, while active students will be rewarded.

### **Screenings:**

While many of the screenings will be viewed during class time, some outside screenings will be required. Some are noted on this syllabus, while others will be added throughout the semester. All assigned screenings will either be on reserve at Pullen Library or at local movie theaters or on television - many screenings are also available at video rental stores with good animation sections (I particularly recommend Movies Worth Seeing in Virginia-Highlands). Additionally, you are encouraged to view as much animation currently in circulation in theaters and television as possible. It is especially advised that you see the following theatrical releases: *Shrek*, *Final Fantasy*, *Osmosis Jones*, *Monsters, Inc.* and *Waking Life* (both coming this fall), as well as any animated films coming to Cinefest at GSU this fall.

### **Course Requirements:**

All of the following requirements must be completed in order to pass this course. If you do not complete the midterm and paper assignments and final exam, you will automatically fail this course:

10 Reading Response Papers	20%
Midterm Analysis Essay	20%
Research Paper Proposal	5%
Research Paper	25%
Final Exam	20%
Class Participation/Attendance	10%

**LATE POLICY:** Late papers are highly discouraged, as they throw off schedules for both student and professor. If you know that you will need to hand in any assignment later than the deadline, please contact the professor **in advance** as soon as the situation becomes apparent - together arrangements can be made, often without penalties. If a paper is not turned in on time without making arrangements with the professor *prior to the due date*, the paper will be penalized by .5 grade points (e.g. an A- becomes a B+) for each day of lateness. If papers are not handed directly to the professor, **it is the student's responsibility to ensure the professor receives the paper**. If a paper is left at the Communication departmental office or sent via email or fax, do **not** assume that it has been received - Professor Mittell will notify you via email when a paper has been received. Unless you have received such a notification, you should phone him to ensure that the paper was in fact received. Please do **NOT** slip papers under the door to Professor Mittell's office - deliver them to the Communication Office (1040 One Park Place). As stated below, late reading response papers will never be accepted.

### **Reading Response Papers:**

All students are required to complete 10 Reading Response papers throughout the semester. They may be on any assigned articles or book sections throughout the semester, but *they must be handed in on or before the day that article is scheduled to be read*. You **will not** receive credit for handing in reading response papers after day on which the article was assigned unless you have been

absent from class for an excused reason and have made specific arrangements with Professor Mittell. You may choose which days and articles you will write about. You **may not** write more than one response for the readings assigned for one day, even if there are multiple chapters. If a day's reading consists of more than one article or chapter, you may respond to all or any portion of the assigned readings - you do not need to summarize the entire slate of readings for that day. All 10 responses together comprise 20% of your final grade; students who hand in fewer than 7 response papers throughout the semester will automatically receive a failing grade for the reading response assignment (20% of your final grade). Please pace these responses throughout the semester and discuss the situation with the instructor if you should fall behind. Each paper will receive a grade of 0-4 points, corresponding to the course's grading scale (see below).

Reading response papers should accomplish two basic goals: they should *briefly summarize the argument(s)* of the chosen reading and give you a chance to *respond intellectually to this argument*. Papers that simply summarize a reading without exploring any of your own thoughts will be graded down. Papers that discuss interesting issues that emerge from the reading are encouraged, but you *must* tie these thoughts to the readings and your summary of the argument. Relating a reading to topics raised in previous readings, class discussions, and screenings is particularly encouraged. These papers are not "thought journals" but they should provide you an opportunity to present your own reaction to these issues in written form. Writing style and form is important, so be sure to take time to edit and proofread any responses before handing them in. Reading responses **must be at least** one full typed page, single-spaced.

#### *Midterm Analysis Assignment:*

This assignment will be detailed more later in the semester, but here is a brief overview. On October 11<sup>th</sup>, you will hand in an analytical essay. You will watch one of a selected list of screenings and write a 5-6 page essay analyzing and relating the film to specific issues raised concerning animation theory, drawing upon the theoretical ideas developed by class readings and discussions. It is worth 20% of your final grade.

#### *Research Paper and Paper Proposal:*

This will be the most challenging (and hopefully interesting) assignment during this class. A more detailed description of this assignment will be presented in class later in the semester, but this is a brief overview. The paper will be a 9-10 page research paper dealing with a facet of animated film or television of your choice, investigating a question or problem that you find interesting and making a clear argument to be supported by your own research. The specific topic is up to each student (subject to professorial approval).

This research paper will consist of a number of steps to be detailed further in-class. An ungraded paper topic list will be due September 20<sup>th</sup>. An in-depth paper proposal will be due October 18<sup>th</sup>, which will be graded and count as 5% of your final grade. An optional first draft of your research paper can be turned in

anytime up to November 13<sup>th</sup>—these drafts will not be graded, but the professor will provide detailed feedback and meet with students to discuss ways to improve the final draft. A rough draft may be turned in after November 13<sup>th</sup>, but there are no guarantees that they will be returned in time for you to make significant revisions for your final paper. The final draft of your research papers will be due in class, November 29<sup>th</sup>. All assignments must be typed and double-spaced. The research paper assignment is worth 25% of your final grade.

#### *Final Exam:*

There will be one lengthy take-home essay examination, which will test your ability to understand and synthesize the readings and in-class materials, not your ability to memorize facts. Students who do the readings, attend class meetings, and think about the material should do well on this exam. The final exam will be due on December 11<sup>th</sup> at 2:45 p.m. The final will be worth 20% of your grade. Make-up exams will only be offered in the most extenuating circumstances – students who need to make alternative testing arrangements must arrange this with the professor as early in the semester as possible.

#### *Class Participation & Attendance:*

You are expected to attend all class meetings on time, having done the readings, thought about the material, and prepared the necessary written assignments. Attendance will not be regularly taken in this course – it is the individual student's responsibility to attend class in order to gain the most from their education. If a student misses a class, it is up to them to find out what they missed from their classmates and make-up the necessary material.

This component of your grade (10%) will be reserved to reward students who do actively participate in class, meet with the professor during office hours, participate in online discussions on the WebCT site, and otherwise demonstrate their engagement with the material. Likewise, this grade will be used to downgrade students who are clearly disengaged with the class or fail to uphold their end of the course policies. Students who are repeatedly tardy or disruptive in class may be asked to leave.

#### *Grades:*

You will be graded based on the following scale, using a 4.0 scale on all assignments:

- A (4.0) is reserved for students who truly excel on assignments, demonstrating mastery of the material and dramatically surpassing the expectations of the assignment.
- B (3.0) is for students who do above-average work, clearly achieving the goals of the course and completing all assignments in a strong fashion.

- C (2.0) is for students who satisfactorily meet the course requirements in an adequate fashion.
- D (1.0) is for students who do not achieve course goals and whose work does not adequately meet expectations.
- F (0.0) is for students who dramatically fail to meet course goals and do not fulfill course expectations.

Grades of Incomplete will only be given under the circumstances detailed in the Undergraduate Catalog. The last day to withdraw from this course to receive a W is October 12<sup>th</sup>. If you are contemplating withdrawing, contact the professor immediately.

### ***General Course Policies:***

This course operates under the assumption that all participants are adults who are responsible for their own choices and priorities. If you find any of these course policies or expectations unclear, it is up to you to discuss these matters with the instructor. It is also up to you to clearly review this syllabus and all assignments as early in the semester as possible, so you can understand what the course's expectations are up front.

The basic expectations for taking this course are:

- You will attend class on-time, prepared, and ready to participate
- You will treat everyone in class with civility and respect
- You will take responsibility for your own work
- All work you submit will be your own and you will not inappropriately assist other students in their work beyond the confines of a particular assignment (please see attached guidelines on academic misconduct).



• **There is a no-tolerance policy for academic misconduct in this course!** The *minimum* penalty for academic misconduct will be a failing grade (F) for the course – further academic and disciplinary penalties may be assessed.

If you are having any difficulties with this or any other class, important GSU resources include Disability Services (3-9044), Counseling Center (1-2211), Student Support Services (1-3357), and the Writing Center (1-2906). Any student with a disability or who otherwise needs accommodation or other assistance should make arrangements with the professor as soon as possible.

Hopefully all students will be able to accomplish the goals and requirements of the course with no major problems. Should a situation arise where you find yourself behind in the course's workload or having problems meeting expectations, please contact Professor Mittell as soon as possible. Any problem can be resolved satisfactorily with enough advanced warning. Please try to anticipate problems so that we may nip them in the bud – trying to resolve problems that have been allowed to linger too long becomes much more difficult. While the course requirements are quite strict and challenging, Professor Mittell will be flexible with students particular needs and situations, but can only respond to issues that are made known openly. Please do not hesitate to make contact throughout the semester, if only just to check in.

Each student is encouraged to meet with Professor Mittell during his office hours or by appointment, to communicate with him via email, and to actively pursue any questions, comments, or concerns you might have about this course. Professor Mittell generally checks email daily, from Monday through Friday – if you email him asking for a response and do not receive one within one working day, assume that your email may not have been received. If you attempt to email an attached document, please use either MS Word or RTF file formats.

### **Weekly Schedule**

#### **Unit 1: Animation Theory**

##### Week of August 20 – What is Animation?

READ (8/23): Wells – Intro (1-9) **No reading response possible**

##### Week of August 27 – Animation & Realism

WATCH (by 8/28): *Pinocchio* (Disney, 1940) [Reserve DVD PN1997 .P566 1999]

READ (8/28): Wells – Chapter 1 (10-34)

READ (8/30): RP – Thompson, "Implications of the Cel Animation Technique"

##### Week of September 3 – Modes of Animation & Narration

READ (9/4): Wells – Chapter 2 (35-67)

READ (9/6): Wells – Chapter 3 (68-126)

#### Week of September 10 - Animation & Comedy

WATCH (by 9/11): *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (Zemeckis, 1988)  
[Reserve DVD PN1995.9.C55 W46 1999]  
READ (9/11): Wells - Chapter 4 (127-186)  
READ (9/13): RP - Lindvall & Melton, "Toward Postmodern  
Animated Discourse"

#### Week of September 17 - Animation & Cultural Representation

READ (9/18): Wells - Chapter 5 (187-221).  
READ (9/20): Handout - Bernstein, "Nostalgia, Ambivalence,  
Irony"  
**ASSIGNMENT:** Turn in Research Paper Topic Sheet, September  
20<sup>th</sup>.

#### Week of September 24 - Animation Audiences

READ (9/25): Wells - Chapter 6 (222-243)  
READ (9/27): RP - Glynn, "Bartmania"  
**SPECIAL MEETING (9/27):** Library Instruction, Pullen North 2<sup>nd</sup>  
floor seminar room

### Unit 2: American Animation History

#### Week of October 1 - Early Animation: 1900-1930s

READ (10/2): Klein - Preface, Chapters 1-4 (1-58)  
READ (10/4): Klein - Chapters 5-9 (59-105)

#### Week of October 8 - The Golden Age of Animation

READ (10/9): Klein - Intermission, Chapters 10-13 (106-155)  
READ (10/11): Klein - Chapters 14-18 (156-199)  
**ASSIGNMENT:** Turn in Midterm Analysis Assignment, October  
11<sup>th</sup>.

#### Week of October 15 - World War II & Decline of Theatrical Animation

READ (10/16): RP - Smoodin, "The Disappearance of Dissent"  
READ (10/18): Klein - Chapters 19 - Conclusion (200-254)  
**ASSIGNMENT:** Turn in Research Paper Proposal, October 18<sup>th</sup>.

#### Week of October 22 - Animation in the Age of Television

WATCH (by 10/23): *Yellow Submarine* (Dunning, 1968)  
[Reserve DVD PN1997.5 .Y45 1999]  
READ (10/23): RP - Mittell - "The Great Saturday Morning  
Exile"  
READ (10/25): RP - Hendershot, "Hey, Hey, Hey, It's 'Good'  
TV"

#### Week of October 29 - Contemporary TV Animation

READ (10/29): RP - Mittell, "Cartoon Realism"  
READ (11/1): RP - Langer, "Animatophilia, Cultural  
Production"

### Unit 3: Japanese Anime

#### Week of November 5 - Understanding Anime

WATCH (by 11/6): *Akira* (Katsurio, 1988) [Reserve DVD, Call #TBA]  
READ (11/6): RP - Lent, "Animation in Asia"  
READ (11/8): Napier, Chapters 1-2 (3-38)

Week of November 12 - Anime and the Body

READ (11/13): Napier, Chapters 3-4 (39-84)

READ (11/15): Napier, Chapters 5-7 (85-138)

**ASSIGNMENT:** Deadline to turn in optional research paper draft, November 13<sup>th</sup>.

Week of November 19 - Anime, Fantasy & History

WATCH (by 11/20): *Princess Mononoke* (Hayao, 1997)

[Reserve DVD PN1997 .P745 2000]

READ (11/20): Napier, Chapters 8-10 (139-192)

11/22: **NO CLASS** (Thanksgiving)

Week of November 26 - The Future of Animation

READ (11/27): Napier, Chapters 11 - Appendix (193-256)

**ASSIGNMENT:** Final draft of research paper due, November 29<sup>th</sup>.

Week of December 3

12/4: **NO CLASS** (Reading Day)

12/6: Wrap-up; distribute take-home exam

FINAL EXAMINATION: Take home exam due December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2:45 p.m.

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*Readings for Film 4280, Mittell, Fall 2001*

**READING PACKET:**

Kristin Thompson. "Implications of the Cel Animation Technique." In *The Cinematic Apparatus*, edited by Teresa and Stephen Heath de Lauretis, New York: St. Martins Press, 1980, 106-119.

Terrance R. Lindvall and J. Matthew Melton. "Toward a Postmodern Animated Discourse: Bakhtin, Intertextuality and the Cartoon Carnival." In *A Reader in Animation Studies*, edited by Jayne Pilling. Sydney: John Libbey. 1997, 203-220.

Kevin Glynn. "Bartmania: The Social Reception of an Unruly Image." *Camera Obscura* 38 (1996): 60-91.

Eric Smoodin. "The Disappearance of Dissent: Government Propaganda and the Military Film Bill." In *Animating Culture: Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993, 71-95.

Jason Mittell. "The Great Saturday Morning Exile: Scheduling Cartoons on Television's Periphery in the 1960s." In *Return to Springfield: Prime Time Animation and Cultural Contexts*, edited by Carol Stabile and Mark Harrison. New York: Routledge, forthcoming.

Heather Hendershot. "Hey, Hey, Hey, It's 'Good' TV: *Fat Albert*, CBS, and Dr. William H. Cosby." In *Saturday Morning Censors*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998, 193-216.

Jason Mittell. "Cartoon Realism: Genre Mixing and the Cultural Life of *The Simpsons*." *The Velvet Light Trap* #47, Spring 2001, 15-28.

Mark Langer. "Animatophilia, Cultural Production and Corporate Interests: The Case of *Ren & Stimpy*." In *A Reader in Animation Studies*, edited by Jayne Pilling. Sydney: John Libbey. 1997, 143-162.

John A. Lent. "Animation in Asia: Appropriation, Reinterpretation, and Adoption or Adaptation." *Screening the Past* 11, 2000 (<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/www/screeningthepast/>)

## **A4.1 NEWPORT**

### ***UWCN BA (Hons) Animation***

**HOUSED WITHIN** the International Film School of Wales (IFSW) at UWCN, the animation degree programme is a well-established course that has been steadily increasing in popularity over the past decade. It has gained an international reputation for producing creative professionals who are able to meet the demands of this diverse industry. Amongst our alumni are high-profile names such as the Oscar nominated Joanna Quinn, Mike Mort (formally of Aargh animations, creators of the Bafta winning Gogs! Series), as well as established animator directors such as Lucy Lee, Joe King, Suzanne Deakin, Paul Hill, and Simon Goodchild. Another rising star is John Williams (winner of the prestigious Maclaren Award for New directors, 2000; and co-director of two Coldplay videos and numerous other adverts). We have graduates at the Framestore, Dreamworks, Dave Edwards Studios, Aardman, Bolex Brothers to name a few. 14 of our graduates have received S4C commissions to make short films over the last two years.

Some of our graduates move on to postgraduate study, exploring film, animation or multimedia (in both practical and academic contexts), or in some cases to achieve a teaching qualification. We boast a 70% success rate of students who obtain work in an animation-related field within the first year of graduation.

#### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

We have a very specific goal at Newport - to help each person develop their practical abilities, creative potential, and above all, self-confidence. We feel that these qualities produce fiercely independent graduates, able to make a significant contribution and apply transferable skills to the workplace. We also expect that our graduates will be comfortable directing their own films or working with others in a studio environment.

The course is as much about developing an understanding of animation as a film art, as it is about teaching specific animation technique. To become a filmmaker in any chosen medium, one needs to be fully conversant with the language of film, as well as having developed animation timing and pacing sensitivities. These are the two main aims of the first year of the course, by the end of which we expect all students to have an excellent foundation upon which to build and develop software skills, and/ or work in other media.

We do not have a specific 'house style', and students are actively encouraged to find the production path and working methodology which best suits them. This promotes a diverse practice spectrum - everything from conventional narrative to fine art installation (where the animation produced is intended to be viewed in a gallery setting - not necessarily screen based). We have good working relationships with all the other courses in the school, and there is a healthy two-way flow into other disciplines. We attribute much of our success to this diversity of practice, which promotes innovation through cross- pollination of ideas and production techniques.

#### **STUDENT LIFE**

An animation course is possibly one of the most labour intensive moving image-based courses to undertake - contrary to popular conceptions of a medium so strongly associated with fun and entertainment.

There is a lot to learn and the students are thrown in at the deep end from the outset. As time goes on, however, the course becomes lighter and more expressive, culminating in the third year where you have the freedom to make an individual three minute film. We aggressively promote student graduation work by entering it into festivals, and distributing via DVD to relevant companies and

industry contacts. We also have IFSW graduation showcases in London and Cardiff where we promote the work of the school. We also have excellent links with the Bristol, Cardiff and London animation communities. We exploit this by regular industry liaison - studio visits, specialist industry guest lectures/ visits, and as part of the course, students are obliged to undertake a work placement in their chosen medium. The reputation of the course means that this is rarely a problem, and in some cases a student can end up in paid employment as a direct result of the placement.

## GENERAL COURSE CURRICULUM - FIRST YEAR

### **Understanding animation –**

Human movement  
Character work  
Lip synching  
Using software (Photoshop, flash, Premiere, Maya, After Effects)  
Observational skills  
Life Drawing

### ***Intro to model making***

Photography

### **Film form – contextual animation -**

Narrative/ anti narrative  
Disney  
Critical analysis  
Scriptwriting

## GENERAL COURSE CURRICULUM - SECOND YEAR

### **Professional practice**

Group work  
Working to a client brief  
Time based design  
Presentation  
Studio practice

Organisational skills/ production skills  
Compulsory work placements  
Working with sound

### **Film Form – Further contextual animation**

Postmodern film

Representation  
Realism and spectacle

## *GENERAL COURSE CURRICULUM - THIRD YEAR*

10,000 word Dissertation

Pre-production, post-production

Completion of 3 Minute film, shot to a broadcast standard (Beta SP) in any media.

## **THE STAFF TEAM**

### **Full Time :**

#### **Caroline Parsons, Programme Leader**

Graduated from WSCAD, Farnham in the early nineties, Caroline worked in the industry for 5 years as a freelance animator and compositor on a variety of productions before coming to teach at Newport. She has been programme leader since 1999.

#### **Gary Pritchard, Senior Lecturer**

A convert to the field of animation, his roots are in live action as a writer, scriptwriter and filmmaker. Gary has been providing scriptwriting, pre-production and theoretical content to the course.

#### **James Manning, Senior Lecturer (CGI) (recent appointment)**

#### **Stan Evens, Technical adviser, Animation**

An invaluable member of the team, (and some would say the most important), Stan assists with the digital productions.

#### **Myk Thomas, Technical adviser, Film**

Assistance / workshops in AVID editing and soundwork (Pro-tools)

### **Visiting:**

#### **Joanna Quinn, Beryl Productions (Oscar nominated animator)**

Joanna continues to support the course by offering workshops and visiting teaching sessions.

#### **Jonathon Edwards, Beryl Productions**

Workshops and on-going support with human movement and character work.

#### **Leonie Sharrock, Beryl Productions**

Life Drawing sessions, human movement

#### **Matt Leonard, Freelance**

Workshops and tutoring in Maya, After Effects and other relevant software

**Gary Jackson, Scarycat Studios**

Model making.

**Fred Reed, Freelance**

3D Lighting

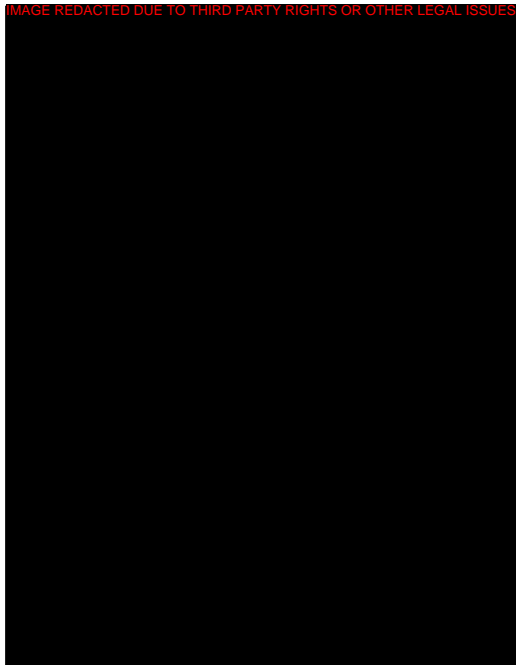
Guest speakers have included:

Michael Dudok De Witt, Jan Svankmayr, Tim Webb, Clive Walley, Jeannine Breaker, Chris Morris (BBC), Chris Shepherd, (Polkadot productions) St. John Walker (The Finishing School), Barry Purves (Bareboard Productions), Helen Brunsden (aardman), Robin Lyons (Siriol).



## **A4.2 NEWPORT**

### **School of Art, Media and Design**



### **Animation Theory and Practice A3**

**Module Code - G104092**

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**SEMESTER 1  
HANDBOOK 2002/03**

# Animation theory and Practice

Level 5

A3

## Project Outlines.

This module introduces the student to a more explorative theoretical and practice based production.

The weekly discourse programme will look at issues in contemporary animation and engage with current debates and ideas that will inform and enrich your work. The programmed workshops and seminars will also equip you to explore sound techniques and new theoretical ideas.

The semester will begin with a short sharp metamorphosis project, which will then lead into the Distant Voices (sound) project, and finish with a group project proposal which will then be realised next semester.

This is designed to allow students to take a more experimental approach to film and sound production and explore the possibilities available in unconventional methods of film production. It is also a precursor to your final degree film, and therefore it is expected that it will demonstrate a high degree of professionalism - in terms of time, project management, and delivery.

The assessment weighting for each project will be summatively assessed as a whole based on the various work outcomes.

### MODULE A3 - ASSESSMENT DETAILS

#### **PRACTICAL**

**PROJECT 1 – Metamorphosis/Soundscape – (finish by Friday 6<sup>th</sup> Oct)**

Screening: Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October

**PROJECT 2 - Hand in Distant Voices (sound) project work to Student Desk, by 2.00pm Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2002.**

**Crit Day (and briefing on next project):**

Crit of Sound Project: Tues/ Wed – 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of December.

PROJECT 3 – Hand in **Self-reflexive project** proposal to Student Desk, by 2.00pm  
Friday 10<sup>th</sup> Jan.

Self-reflexive project crit – Mon/Tue 13/14<sup>th</sup> Jan

## **PROJECT 1**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Animation</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b>	<b>Metamorphosis/Soundscape</b>
<b>MODULE:</b>	<b>A3</b>
<b>WEEK:</b>	<b>10-11 (WB 30/09 – 07/10)</b>

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### **BRIEF:**

To produce a group film similar to the metamorphosis project at the beginning of year 1. This time however, you will use the summer sound exercise as the basis for the outcome. You should take one sound from your chosen film, and express this visually. Remember that inbetweens should be drawn so that a metamorphosis is created from the image to the object and back again. Use your materials creatively, experimenting with charcoal, paint, ink, pencil, whatever to really explore the objects you are portraying.

Each metamorphosis should be approximately 10 seconds of screen time (ie. 250 drawings).

This entire project will span one week: 30 September – 6<sup>th</sup> October and students will have to be disciplined about finishing the work and adhering to the shooting schedule so that we can fit everyone in, since there is such a big group this year.

## **PROJECT 2**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Animation</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b>	<b>Distant Voices (SOUND PROJECT)</b>
<b>MODULE:</b>	<b>A4</b>
<b>WEEKS:</b>	<b>11 - 19 (WB 7th October – 2nd December 2002)</b>

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### **BRIEF:**

To produce a piece of work which fully exploits the use of sound within a visual context. This can be a film (1-2 minutes in length), or an installation.

### **NOTES:**

Sound is often the last element thought of in a film, and is often seen as the final stage of post production.

However, sound plays an essential part in animated filmmaking and is a powerful medium for communication. This project can be entirely audio based (as in Derek Jarman's *Blue*), using a blank screen or creating an installation but due consideration **MUST** be given to the visual presentation of the finished piece. It is not enough to simply play a tape recording of the work.

If you listen to the ways in which radio plays communicate narrative information you can soon spot clichés, but can also pick up short cuts to conveying information that visually may be time consuming or less effective to communicate (for example Caroline Leaf's film *The Two Sisters* in which a claustrophobic domestic atmosphere was conveyed through sound, not always image). Chris Marker's *'La Jetée'* on the other hand, privileges the still image over the moving image in conveying nostalgia for a childhood revisited.

Jan Svankmajer's use of sound is excellent at unsettling the audience. The sound in his films is presented in unusual ways which aren't strictly naturalistic, and can discomfort an audience very quickly (think of the unease generated when sound is lost on a film and the audience has to sit through extended silent periods). The conventional expectation of immaculately recorded 'naturalistic' sound as presented in most mainstream feature films can be played with and subverted to manipulate the audience's response.

### **AIMS:**

- to engage with the issues surrounding sound in relation to filmmaking.
- to learn to organise work to a good production level, negotiating technical demands, disciplined planning and material that is both creative and of a high standard.
- to prepare the ground for the next stage of your degree programme.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- to demonstrate a competent understanding of the actual production process, and to engage with critical analysis of the finished work.

**OUTCOME:**

- To produce a piece of work (1-2 minutes in length), which fully exploits the use of sound within a visual context. This can be a film or an installation.
- Students must present a typed research report, synopsis and pre-production folder as background work for the finished piece.

**CONTENT:**

- Seminars, screenings, group discussions and critiques.

**DEADLINE/ FORMAL CRIT :**

- **Hand in work:** 2.00 pm, Fri 6<sup>th</sup> December 2002  
(this will be marked at the Formal Crit on Tue/Wed 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> December).

Please note that work not handed in on this date will lose one numerical point.

NB : FOR MORE GENERAL ASSESSMENT DETAILS, PLEASE REFER TO COURSE HANDBOOK.

**PROJECT 3**

**MODULE A3**

**SUBJECT:** Animation  
**PROJECT TITLE:** Self-reflexive project proposal  
**MODULE:** A3  
**WEEKS:** 20-24 (WB 9<sup>th</sup> December 2002 – 6<sup>th</sup> Jan 2003)

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**BRIEF: SELF-REFLEXIVE FILMMAKING – Group Project**

Produce a proposal for an adapted 1 - 2 minute audio -visual piece adapted from any existing media/ text. This could be for example a book, poem, piece of music, feature film or newspaper article.

The project is centred on the processes of digital film production.

Students will work in small groups of 3 or 4, and should all participate in every element of the project proposal.

One of the objects of this project is to develop awareness in the student of a self-reflexive approach to filmmaking. The following extract introduces this issue with a useful overview:

Animated films demonstrate self-reflexivity in three general and overlapping ways. First, by commenting on filmmaking and the film industry and by unveiling the raw materials and methods of the filmmaking process, cartoons reveal their own textuality. Second, animated films possess the ability to function as discourse, speaking directly to their audiences. Third, animated films reflect their relationship to their creators. The animators themselves enter their cartoons and become deconstructive agents of their own artifice. Animated film is a genre in which the auteur is not only dominant, but also able to speak directly to her or his audience. As Steven Schneider notes, 'animation is probably the ultimate autrueist cinema.'

The irony of filmmaking as the subject of film draws attention to the craft, the business and the visions behind such enterprises. The writer/director is able to explore his or her work and question it, its techniques and its values. These films are not mere exercises in vain speculation, but serve as excursions into the fundamental nature and purposes of film. (Lindvall & Melton in Pilling 1997)

Your work should include a reflection of your group's engagement with the discussion introduced above.

NOTE: It is very important that you work out a detailed, realistic production schedule. Although only a proposal at this stage, you will eventually (in semester 2) go on to translate the proposal into an actual film. It should account for the strengths and weaknesses of your group, and should be continually revised as necessary.

#### **AIMS:**

- to engage with debates surrounding self reflexive filmmaking and grapple with the tensions between theory and practice
- to learn to organise work to a pre-production level, negotiating group dynamics, disciplined planning and material that is both creative and of a high standard.
- to prepare the ground for the next stage of your degree programme.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- to demonstrate a competent understanding of the actual pre-production process, and to engage with critical analysis of the group's work.

#### **OUTCOME:**

**All the following elements will be included in the assessment of the project. In other words, your group will need to pay detailed attention to these outcomes.**

- Students must present a typed research report, synopsis and full colour storyboard as background work for the finished piece.

- to keep an individual diary of how the group worked together, good days and bad days, dynamics and roles of the group members.

### **CONTENT:**

- Seminars, screenings, group discussions and critiques.

### **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (COVERING ALL PROJECTS):**

Your work should demonstrate:

#### **Creativity:**

an original and creative approach to the film making process  
that you have explored a variety of approaches and arrived at a method of production appropriate to your idea.  
A keenness to take risks and experiment beyond your boundaries.

#### **Research:**

That you have thoroughly researched the subject that you have chosen.  
That you can apply the benefits of research to creative practice.  
That you have arrived at a balanced relationship between theory and practice, where some aspect of the original research informs the final outcome, but where the research does not overwhelm or dominate than the final outcome.

#### **Development:**

that you understand the importance of proper planning and preparation.  
That you have managed your time effectively and produced a piece of work, which conveys a transparent working methodology and clarity of intent.  
Your animation should show evidence of personal expression through an animated sequence, which conveys your own visual language.  
An ability to clearly progress an idea through the creative process to a successful conclusion.  
That you have created a realistic production schedule for the work you intend to produce.

#### **Outcome:**

Synthesise practical skills developed in earlier modules to produce fluid, inventive and meaningful animated statements.  
That your work is presented in a professional and appropriate way, where possible using digital media.  
A flexibility of style, facilitating experimentation with animation styles and techniques.  
That you have an overall awareness of structure and pace within animation.  
that you have understood the principles of representation, narrative drama and building atmosphere through your work.

**Technical:**

Your ability to use equipment competently, whatever your chosen medium.  
That you are able to produce work to a high technical standard.

**Studentship:**

That you are fully engaged with the course, it's curriculum and staff.  
That you have engaged with critical debates within the field of animation, experimental film and moving image work generally. This would include an awareness of the issues surrounding representation.

**NB: FOR MORE GENERAL ASSESSMENT DETAILS, PLEASE REFER TO COURSE HANDBOOK.**



### A4.3 NEWPORT

#### NEWPORT DOCUMENT (HANDBOOK FOR ANIMATION PROJECT)

Innovation & Research

Level 5  
A4

Semester 2  
Project outlines

As you enter the second semester of your second year you should be developing a style, work methodology and an idea of the kind of filmmaker you want to be. The next module should see your work evolve to a more professional standard, and should also provoke questions about where you aspire to position yourself within the industry. It will see you developing your theoretical interests and strengths too, in preparation for the final year dissertation.

You will be expected to continue working in the studio space, taking advantage of the advice and encouragement of your peers. Research plays a central part in developing your work and you should be keeping both sketchbooks and video sketchbooks of work in progress.

You have access to the studio from 9.00 am until 7.30 pm. Staying later in the evening and at weekends is to be agreed by arrangement with the College Estates Department, through the Subject Leader (Caroline Parsons). It is very important that if you do get permission to stay later that you respect the environment, and don't smoke in the studios or in any way abuse the trust that has been placed in you.

All questions relating to the module should be addressed in the first instance to the Module Leader (Gary Pritchard). Many of the details you may wish to know, such as assessment criteria and times, timetables and reading lists will be in this handbook so make sure you read through it thoroughly.

SEMESTER TWO - Animation

MODULE TITLE Animation Theory and Practice 4

MODULE NUMBER A4

MODULE CODE G104093

MODULE LEADER Gary Pritchard

LEVEL 5

SEMESTER 2

.....  
This module will enable you to develop further your own working methodology and professional practice.

It consists of several strands: a) the realisation of your self-reflexive proposal (group project) into a film, b) a 1000 word report/essay which analyses a critical evaluation of your self-reflexive film, c) a studio practice project that will result in a professional ident pitch, d) student-led presentations (to your peers) that flows from the discourse programme in the first semester and e) a final year film research/proposal project, and f) animation buddy scheme (yes, we are serious!) As you can see, it is a full programme so you will need to be well organised and diligent.

## MODULE A3 - ASSESSMENT DETAILS

### Deadlines

Self-reflexive project ? 5th March - Crit: in E8 10am start

Ident Crit - 2nd April E8 10am start

Video & Essay work - 2nd May hand in at Student Desk

A4 Crit ? 8th/9th May

## PROJECT OUTLINES

### PROJECT (a)

PROJECT TITLE: Self-reflexive project

MODULE: A4

WEEKS: 27-32 (WB 27.01.03 - 03.03.03 )

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### BRIEF: SELF-REFLEXIVE FILMMAKING

Produce an adapted 1 - 2 minute audio-visual piece from your semester 1 group proposal: adapted from any existing media/text.

The work must be completed on beta tape.

The project is centred on the processes of digital film production. Students will work in small groups of 3 or 4, and should all participate in every element of the filmmaking.

Your work should include a reflection of your group's engagement with the discussion introduced in semester 1.

NOTES: It is very important that you work out a detailed, realistic production schedule. It should account for the strengths and weaknesses of your group, and should be continually revised as necessary.

You should leave approximately four weeks at the end of the project for post-production; re-shoots if needed, editing and sound. This always takes longer than you would imagine and is a very important part of the learning process.

There will be workshops on digital production which you will all be

expected to attend.

**AIMS:**

- to engage with debates surrounding self reflexive filmmaking and grapple with the tensions between theory and practice
- to learn the basic technical processes involved in film or broadcast video production, sound, film processing & editing
- to increase your range and confidence in techniques, formats and equipment

**OBJECTIVES:**

- to demonstrate a competent understanding of the actual production of beta tape, and to engage with critical analysis of the group's work.

**OUTCOME:**

All the following elements will be included in the assessment of the project. In other words, your group will need to pay detailed attention to these outcomes.

- produce a 2 minute animated film to a set brief on beta tape, with titles and a suitable soundtrack.
- to keep an individual diary of how the group worked together, good days and bad days, dynamics and roles of the group members.
- to enter your Beta film into an Animation Festival.

**CONTENT:**

- Seminars, screenings, group discussions and critiques. Digital workshops on editing, sound and basic & advanced camera techniques. (you will present an 'work-in-progress' research/synopsis /storyboard update a few weeks into the project)

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:**  
SEE BELOW

**PROJECT (b)**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Self-reflexive project report/essay

**MODULE:** A4

**WEEKS:** 27-32 (WB 27.01.03 - 0503.03.03 )

Write a 1000 word report/essay, which details and analyses a critical evaluation of your self-reflexive film. This may include a formal theoretical connection between your initial research and the final outcomes. In other words, it could form the beginnings of a theoretical foundation around which you may want to build upon as part of your dissertation proposal (see Moving Image Subject assignments).

PROJECT (c)  
MODULE A3 ? STUDIO PRACTICE:

PROJECT TITLE: Ident Proposal/Pitch  
MODULE: A4  
WEEKS: 11 - 14 (10.03.03 - 03.04.03)

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## BRIEF

Following on from your summer project research work, this project is concerned with applied animation and your role will be one of both designer and animator.

You are required to:

Produce an 8 second ident sting for an identified TV channel's theme (any theme). This could be sports, children's, horror, pancake day, etc etc. OR enter a current sting/ident competition (details to follow)

You should begin by writing a synopsis (see below), based on your research findings, outlining your plans for designs and effect. You must make a professional presentation of your ideas. This should include a full colour storyboard and any examples of models, sets & visual research you deem necessary.

## SYNOPSIS - THE ANALYSIS OF YOUR IDENT

The design of your ident must obviously target the same audience that the programme makers have identified. When you've established your audience - by its age, background and aspirations - you can begin to question what images will appeal to them and why - analyse their tastes. Consider your use of colours and textures and the effect they have, the style of illustration and the images you choose, the atmosphere and lighting and the mood it creates, even consider the type of animation i.e. cut-out, model etc, that you employ. All of these elements will have an impact on your target audience. Your synopsis must address these issues.

Students must present a typed synopsis and full colour storyboard as background work for the finished piece.

Your choice of soundtrack is also very important and will again have an immediate impact on your audience. Use whatever means you have to create the most suitable and effective atmosphere. Be versatile in your approach. Remember we are a very sophisticated audience - the production of idents has evolved immeasurably from a simple statement of information - are used to a high standard of creativity and finish. To produce a channel ident (the identification sting that lets you know who you are watching) e.g. Channel 4, MTV, BBC2.

The function of the ident is to give the viewer information about:

- which channel the audience is watching
- what kind of programmes the channel produces
- what kind of audience the channel is targeting

Therefore, you should demonstrate that you have researched and borne in mind these factors when producing your idents.

#### AIMS:

- to apply the basic principles of graphic design - colour type and image
- to animate in an original and experimental way
- to interpret the brief in an original and creative way

#### OBJECTIVES:

- to demonstrate an understanding of the processes and context of commercial and commissioned animation

#### OUTCOME:

- to produce a channel ident
- to produce a short sting for inclusion on a final PAL resolution showreel
- to produce a low resolution showreel for pressing onto a CD

#### ASSESSMENT CRITERIA: SEE BELOW

#### CONTENT:

- Lectures, screenings, group discussions and critiques.  
Visiting lecturers.

#### Project (d) DISCOURSE SUBJECT PRESENTATIONS

PROJECT TITLE: Subject Presentations

MODULE: A4

WEEKS: 27-12 (WB 27 Jan - 5th May 2003)

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#### Brief:

This project will see you working as part of a group (minimum 3 people - maximum 4). Your task is to front a student-led session that explores an area of animation film practice and theory of your choice. This could draw on extended research based upon an issue that you have already undertaken in the last module (Caroline's/Gary's sessions) or another source (eg Moving Image Programme). Or, it could be a strand of research based upon your own personal interest. The idea is that we end up with a broad series of subjects presented over the Monday afternoon scheduled sessions. Subjects will need to be booked in advance with Gary, so as to avoid repetition in the presentations.

**Task:**

You are required to lead a session of your peers where you explore an area of research into a facet of animation theory / practice.

**ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENT:**

You will present a group session based upon the agreed subject on a negotiated date in the programme (Monday afternoons).

You will also be required to produce the following:

- a group research folder based on your preparation for the presentation (including library research, internet, images, presentation plan etc)

Students must present written work that is presented to a legible standard.

(THIS IS A PASS/FAIL PROJECT)

Comprises a group presentation based on your own research and material from the lecture programme from semester 1. This is a straight pass/fail project, but must be completed in order to pass the overall module

**Project (e)**

PROJECT TITLE: Final degree film proposal

MODULE: A4

WEEKS: 36-41 (WB 31.03.03 ? 05.05.03)

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**Brief:**

This project is a crucial step in preparing for the key elements of the work you will be engaging in during your final year. Although approached with a preparatory outlook, you should not however neglect a thorough and professional commitment. In other words, as the outcome of this work is assessed in its own right, it should be treated as a 'stand-alone' project.

Having stressed this fact, a thorough and excellent project at this stage will position the student in a superb place to go on and complete a highly successful final year.

**Task:**

You are required to develop a comprehensive proposal for your final year film.

Using the skills you should have developed over previous projects ('Ident', 'Self-reflexive etc. '); you should consider and develop the following elements when considering your final film idea:

- \* a research folder
- \* a synopsis
- \* a project report
- \* image ideas/storyboards

It is expected by this stage of your degree programme, that you will be familiar with developing and executing work with a high degree of independence. Your work should be informed by bright and innovative ideas, and developed with a high degree of creative intelligence and innovation.

You should begin by writing a synopsis based on your research findings, outlining your plans for designs and effect. You must make a professional

presentation of your ideas. This should include storyboard visual, and any examples of models, sets & visual research you deem necessary, a project report (outlining potential problems, strategies and schedules), an anamatic or time-based research (eg. video sketchbook).

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:  
SEE BELOW

CONTENT:

- Lectures, screenings, group discussions and critiques.  
Hand-in date: 2.00pm ? 2nd May 2003

PROJECT (f)  
PROJECT TITLE: Animation Buddy Scheme  
MODULE: A4  
WEEKS: 27-41 (WB 27.01.03 - 05.05.03 )

The Animation Buddy Scheme is designed to supplement your programme by giving you the opportunity to align yourself with a third year student as they enter their final film pre-production/production period. This will be of significant benefit to them, as you will provide essential support and back-up during the filmmaking process. It will however, also provide you with a superb opportunity to gain experience of how your own final year will feel and operate, and at the same time create a mentoring environment that should prove invaluable.

This project is primarily experiential, but you will be expected to provide:

- \* a journal of your 'buddy' experience
- \* self evaluation sheet (provided)
- \* a completed report from the third year student of your conduct and input

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (COVERING ALL PROJECTS):

Your work should demonstrate :

Creativity :

an original and creative approach to the film making process  
that you have explored a variety of approaches and arrived at a method of production appropriate to your idea.  
A keenness to take risks and experiment beyond your boundaries.

Research :

That you have thoroughly researched the subject that you have chosen.  
That you can apply the benefits of research to creative practice.  
That you have arrived at a balanced relationship between theory and practice, where some aspect of the original research informs the final outcome, but where the research does not overwhelm or dominate than the final outcome.

Development :

that you understand the importance of proper planning and preparation.  
That you have managed your time effectively and produced a piece of work which conveys a transparent working methodology and clarity of intent.

Your animation should show evidence of personal expression through an animated sequence, which conveys your own visual language.  
 An ability to clearly progress an idea through the creative process to a successful conclusion.  
 That you have created a realistic production schedule for the work you intend to produce.

Outcome :

Synthesise practical skills developed in earlier modules to produce fluid, inventive and meaningful animated statements.  
 That your work is presented in a professional and appropriate way, where possible using digital media .  
 A flexibility of style, facilitating experimentation with animation styles and techniques.  
 That you have an overall awareness of structure and pace within animation.  
 that you have understood the principles of representation, narrative drama and building atmosphere through your work.

Technical :

Your ability to use equipment competently, whatever your chosen medium.  
 That you are able to produce work to a high technical standard.

Studentship :

That you are fully engaged with the course , it's curriculum and staff.  
 That you have engaged with critical debates within the field of animation , experimental film and moving image work generally. This would include an awareness of the issues surrounding representation.

NB : FOR MORE GENERAL ASSESSMENT DETAILS, PLEASE REFER TO COURSE HANDBOOK.

## READING LIST

- Barthes, Roland            Image-Music-Text, Fontana, 1977  
 Bell, Haas and Sells (eds) From Mouse to Mermaid - the politics of film, gender and culture, Indiana University Press, 1995  
 Benjamin, Walter        'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in Illuminations,  
 Bordwell, David & Thompson, Kristen Film Art, Addison Wesley, 1979  
 Christie, Ian            The Last Machine - early cinema and the birth of the modern world, BFI, 1994  
 de Lauretis, Teresa & Heath, Stephen    The Cinematic Apparatus, Macmillan London 1980  
 Hayward, Philip & Wollen, Tanya (eds) Future Visions: new technologies of the screen, BFI 1993  
 Pilling, Jayne            A Reader in Animation Studies, John Libbey?  
 Starr, Cecile & Russet, Robert    Experimental Animation: an illustrated anthology, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York 1976  
 Wells, Paul            Understanding Animation, Routledge 1998  
 Wollen, Peter            Signs and Meaning in the Cinema, London: BFI, 1998



Journals:

Animation Journal, Screen, Convergence

Film-makers:

Jane Campion, Ian Cross, Maya Deren, Sergei Eisenstein, Jean-Luc Godard,  
Stuart Hilton, Ruth Lingford, Chris Marker, John Maybury, Keith Piper,  
Sarah Pucill, Jean Cocteau, Dziga Vertov, Richard Wright

WWW:

<http://panushka.absolutvodka.com/>

<http://www.awn.com>

<http://www.cs.sfu.ca/people/GradStudents/bishko/personal/anim/>

<http://www.chapman.edu/animation/>

<http://www.lea.org.uk/>

<http://www.backspace.org>

[http://dmoz.org/Arts/Movies/Genres/Experimental\\_Film/](http://dmoz.org/Arts/Movies/Genres/Experimental_Film/)

## **A4.4 NEWPORT**

### ***DISCOURSE SCHEDULE***

#### ***Year 1***

Semester 2 Year 1  
Tuesdays at 1.30pm in E8

#### **Scriptwriting Block (4 Lectures)**

**Jan 28** 10 Story Types **GP**

**Feb 3 (MON)** Narrative Conventions **GP/CH** (\*NOTE CHANGE OF DAY)

**Feb 11** Writing the Image **GP**

**Feb 18** Writing the Script **GP**

#### **Representing Truth Block (4 Lectures)**

**Feb 25** Poetic and Fantastic License **CP**

**March 4** Disney and the Realist Principle **CP**

**March 11** Death of the Author **GP**

**March 18** "The demons made me do it" - Media Effects **GP**

#### **Abstract Animation Block (2 Lectures)**

**March 25** But is it art? – exploding convention **GP**

**Apr 1** Like watching paint dry (Robert Breer, Len Lye, Norman Maclaren et al **CP**

**May 6** Screening:

Sem 1 Year 1 (L4-A1) **THE BODY**

#### **The Body and Language (2 Lectures)**

**Oct 1** Cartoon Language **CP**

**Oct 8** Ways of Seeing **GP**

#### **Body and Culture (2 Lectures)**

**Oct 15** Let the Boys Wear Pink **GP**

**Oct 22** The Sculptured Body **GP**

#### **Body and Realism (3 Lectures)**

**Oct 29** Telling it like it is **GP**

**Nov 5** Disney/Studio history part 1 **CP**

**Nov 12** Disney/Studio history part 2 **CP**

#### **Feminism and Masculinity (3 lectures)**

**Nov 19** Dogs & Bitches – gender roles and stereotypes

**Nov 26** Betty Boop versus the Disney Female **CP**

**Dec 3** Superman and the Disney Male **CP**

**Screening: Dec 9**

DISCOURSE SCHEDULE

Year 2

Sem 1 Year 2 (L5-A3) **ANIMATION THEORY & PRACTICE**  
**All sessions in room E8 Monday afternoons – 1.30pm – 3.30pm**

**Sep 30** SCREENING 1 GP/CP: **‘WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT’**

**Oct 7** Self-reflexive cinema 1 GP

**Oct 14** Self-reflexive cinema 2 GP

**Oct 21** Queer Animation CP

**Oct 28** Art & Animation CP

**Nov 4** Anime CP

**Nov 11** Merchandising GP

**Nov 18** New Spaces for Animation – web, games, interactive narrative GP

**Nov 25** Surrealist Animation CP

**Dec 2** Body and Space – video art GP

**Dec 9** Screening:

**Dec 16** Screening:

**READING LIST:**

Towards a Postmodern Animated Discourse –

Terrance Lindvall & J. Matthew Melton

Self-reflexivity etc. – handouts

**What is Postmodernism – Dominic Strinati**

## **A5 PATRICK**

### ***Basic Animation***

#### **CAT 2033 Section 09969**

Spring 2001

Visual Communication Design

ACC Northridge Campus

M W F 8:00am-9:50am

Room 4262

**Instructor:** Eric Patrick

**Phone:** 444-7550

**Email:** [ericp@austin.rr.com](mailto:ericp@austin.rr.com)

**Office Hours:** Friday 10:00am-11:00am or by appointment

#### **Course Description:**

This course is designed to teach the art and mechanics of animation. Students will learn from in-class lectures and demonstrations, daily exercises, and video examples. They will then use this information to complete three short projects. One of the first two projects will be a stop motion piece. The other can be composed in any of the techniques that we study during the first weeks of class. The final project will be 15-90 seconds in duration.

#### **Attendance:**

Attendance is mandatory. Not coming to class will adversely affect your grade. Much of the information we cover is not available in a book, and you must be here to get the information. I know that this is an early class, and it isn't easy to get yourself here all the time. For this reason, I will start the class at 8:10. Please be here every day ready to go by 8:10.

#### **Grading:**

Roughly... this is the breakdown of grades, though to make it a little more obvious, if you come to class every time and turn in all of your assignments on time, you get an A. The less you do, the more it affects your grade.

Attendance, Participation	10%
Videotape of locomotion exercises	20%
Sketchpad	05%
Animation Project 1	05%
Animation Project 2	10%
Final Animation	50%
Breakdown:	
Story/script	05%
Storyboard	10%
Character design/ Model sheet	05%
Shot sheet/ Self Critique	05%
Final Animation	25%
(includes drawing, movement, transitions, timing & execution)	

#### **Supplies:**

- Course packet
- Sketchpad (8 1/2 x 11, for class exercises)
- Ream of copier paper, 8 1/2 x 11
- Large envelopes or expandable folders (for animation drawings)

- Lots of pencils (#2Bs, col-erase pencils)
  - Small pencil sharpener
  - Straight edge ruler
  - Small mirror
  - 2 VHS tapes (one for projects and exercises, the other for class tape of final project)
- Some sort of system for drawing animation. Cartoon Color has inking boards for about \$20 that come with an animation pegbar. You can make your own, or you can buy a cheap light box from a photo/art supplier, and buy a pegbar to use with it. Utrecht Art Supplies is a good option. In town, there's Asel Art Supply on MLK, and Precision Camera on Lamar.
  - Additionally, you will need small objects/ toys and materials for your stop-motion piece, and any drawing or animation materials that you prefer to use for your projects.

Each student will be assigned a drawing board with a number for use during the semester. You must take care to return it to the closet after each class unless specifically checked out. You must return it safely by the end of the semester.

#### **Recommended Books:**

I'm not requiring any books for this class. Your course packet will have most of the basic information you need. The following are some books that are useful for animation and filmmaking that you may want to consider if you continue after the end of the semester.

The Encyclopedia of Animation Techniques  
By Richard Taylor

The Animation Book, A Complete Guide to Animated Filmmaking -- from flip-books to sound cartoons  
by Kit Laybourne

Experimental Animation, Origins of a new art  
by Robert Russett and Cecile Starr

Muybridge: Animal Locomotion, Human Locomotion

Timing for Animation  
by Harold Whitaker and John Halas

The Elements of Cinema: Toward a Theory of Cinesthetic Impact  
By Stefan Sharff

Creating 3-D animation: The Aardman Book of Filmmaking  
By Peter Lord & Brian Sibley

Cartoons: One hundred years of cinema animation  
By Giannalberto Bendazzi

[www.awn.com](http://www.awn.com) (animation world network)

#### **Class Schedule:**

For ease of scheduling, the semester will generally work as follows. On Mondays, we will have a lecture and screening about a technique of animation. On Wednesdays, we will have a lecture and screening about different aspects of timing, locomotion, and general principles of animation. I will try to keep Fridays as an open workday, but sometimes we will have information to cover and

student work to view. You will have work to do at home. Due dates are all on Friday, though I will accept all assignments by the following Monday without considering them late.

**Week 1:**

Wednesday, January 17: Introduction to course, instructor, equipment, syllabus, resources for supplies, books, etc.  
Friday, January 19: Learn about field guides. Lecture on straight-ahead animation, key framing and in-betweening. Discussion of movement & timing. Exposure Sheets. Warm up exercises. Pencil test demonstration. Drawing exercises.

**Week 2:**

Monday, January 22: Pixelation/Object  
Wednesday, January 24: The Bouncing Ball/Metamorphosis  
Friday, January 26: Lecture on anticipation, overlapping action, the wave principle, successive breaking of joints, follow through, Squash & Stretch, Weight in Movement, Head Turns, Overlapping Action, Arcs

**Week 3:**

Monday, January 29: Drawn/Scratched on Film  
Wednesday, January 31: The Walk/Run Cycle  
Friday, February 2: Lecture on film language, storyboard, character design. Drawing exercises.

**Week 4:**

Monday, February 5: Collage/Cutouts  
Wednesday, February 7: Bird Flight  
Friday, February 9: **Story ideas due.**

**Week 5:**

Monday, February 12: Clay Objects (Stop Motion/Armatures)  
Wednesday, February 14: Four legged walk  
Friday, February 16: Work on pencil testing animation exercises. **Scripts due. Sketchbook due.**

**Week 6:**

Monday, February 19: Sand/Paint/Clay on glass  
Wednesday, February 21: Fall, Hit, Throw, Catch  
Friday, February 23: **Rough storyboard Due. Videotape of Project 1 due.**

**Week 7:**

Monday, February 26: A meets B, A loses B, A gets B back: basic narrative strategies.  
Wednesday, February 28: Grab, Lift, Pull, Push  
Friday, March 2: Begin shooting animation project 2. **Character design, model sheet due. Final storyboard due.**

**Week 8:**

Monday, March 5: Musical, Literary Interpretation  
Wednesday, March 7: The Take, staggers  
Friday, March 9: Continue shooting animation project 2. Supervised work on final animation project.

**Week 9:**

Monday, March 12: **Spring Break**  
Wednesday, March 14: **Spring Break**  
Friday, March 16: **Spring Break**

**Week 10:**

Monday, March 19: Dream, Myth, Memory/Personal Expressions

Wednesday, March 21: Dance

Friday March 23: Continue shooting animation project 2. Supervised work on final animation project. **Videotapes of Animation Project 2 and Animation Exercises due.**

**Week 11:**

Monday, March 26: Uncovering the Skeletal Structure

Wednesday, March 28: Lip Sync

Friday, March 30: Supervised work on final animation project

**Week 12:**

**Monday, April 2: The Animated Documentary/Social Commentary**

**Wednesday, April 4: Effects Animation**

Friday, April 6: Supervised work on final animation project.

**Week 13:**

Monday, April 9: Surrealism/Abstraction/Environmental Animation

Wednesday, April 11: Acting/Cel Animation

Friday, April 13: Supervised work on final animation project.

**Week 14:**

Monday, April 16: Absolute Animation/Visual Music/Shamanism, Alchemy, and Metaphysics

Wednesday April 18: Titles/Editing/Sound Effects/Music

Friday, April 20: Supervised work on final animation project. Begin sending final projects to tape.

**Week 15:**

Monday, April 23: The Independent Vision

Wednesday, April 25: Computer Animation Demonstration (2D and 3D)

Friday, April 27: Supervised work on final animation project. Continue sending final projects to tape.

**Week 16:**

Monday, April 30: The Collective Vision (production hierarchy)

Wednesday, May 2: Demo Tapes

Friday, May 4: Supervised work on final animation project. Continue sending final projects to tape.

**Week 17:**

Monday, May 7: Last Words on Technical/Conceptual approaches.

Wednesday, May 9: Marketing, Festivals, and what to do after the film is made.

Friday, May 11: **Presentation of final Projects. Class Critique.**

## **A6 ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART**

### **RCA ANIMATION DEPT 2002-03 College Aims and Objectives.**

The Royal College of Art aims to achieve international standards of excellence in the postgraduate and pre-/mid-professional education of artists and designers and related practitioners. It aims to achieve these through the quality of its teaching, research and practice and through its relationship with the institutions, industries and technologies associated with the disciplines of art and design.

The College aims to achieve these standards of excellence:

- By fostering a high level of understanding of the principles and practice of art and design;
- By encouraging individual creativity among staff and students;
- By recruiting students of proven ability and by providing pre-professional and post experience study opportunities;
- By continuously enhancing appropriate links and collaborations with industries and professional bodies;
- By exploring the innovative applications of technologies and processes to the disciplines of art and design;
- And through co-operation and partnership with other institutions.

### **MA Course Aims and Objectives**

#### **Aims**

To provide a centre of excellence in the postgraduate study of Animation and Animated Project Production to meet both national and international requirements in the subject area for students from a variety of relevant graduate backgrounds. To provide graduates who will lead the developing study and practice of animation and extend the boundaries of the discipline.

#### **Objectives**

On completion of the MA Course, in addition to reinforcing and extending their knowledge of Animated Film History, Theory and Practice students will have established their own individual style and abilities necessary for them to work as professional animated project makers in a variety of roles. They will have:

- a) Become versed in some of the history of animated film and contemporary trends and techniques.
- b) Developed skills of research and interpretation from both primary and secondary source materials.



- c) Developed skills in the presentation of a project offered for development of an animated project.
- d) Acquired a working knowledge of the budgeting, and scheduling of a short Animated project.
- e) Acquired a basic understanding of the legal responsibilities of a Filmmaker i.e. copyright clearance and contracts with project contributors.
- f) Developed practical skills to a proficient level in key aspects of film, video or digital production relevant to their method of working and become expert in some.
  - g) Had experience of working in a team.
- h) Been introduced to business skills necessary to setting up a small business or becoming a freelance director or animator.

### **Teaching and Learning Methods**

The main teaching strategy of the course is for the students to actively practice the making of an animated project with the guidance of experienced practitioners.

Practical guidance takes the form of workshops, production meetings, group tutorials and one-to-one tutorials.

To show the depth of their understanding the students are required to write a dissertation and be able to discuss their work in depth in tutorials and assessments.

Special techniques workshops introduce students to other ways of working. Camera and lighting workshops or tutorials enable model-animators to achieve convincing atmosphere and composition in their work. Directing workshops encourage animation students to gain understanding of movement and motivation for actors. Casting Actors workshops give students confidence to work with professional actors and therefore work towards a professional end result. Sound workshops encourage the creative design of soundtracks and teach skills in achieving those ideas.

### *Course Curriculum*

*The Course Curriculum is primarily designed for MA students but Mphil, PhD and PEP students can elect to follow sections of the MA curriculum appropriate to their area of study.*

Prior to enrolment, students are expected to prepare themselves for the Course by reading the recommended books from the list sent to them during the summer.

## **First Term, Year 1 (11 weeks)**

### **Weeks 1 to 6: Rotating Workshops**

On arrival, students will receive an outline of the schedule for the first term with a programme of the first year and the timing of the Interim Assessment. The curriculum is discussed further at the Department Forum and students are invited to ask questions on any elements that are unclear.

During the first six weeks the students will work in small groups on three projects in turn:

- a) To devise and shoot a short sequence involving as many of the capacities of the rostrum camera as possible.
- b) The planning and recording of a short composition in sound only. This involves digital tracklaying and mixing of the layered tracks.
- c) The analysing frame by frame of a short piece of speech; animating a sequence of action either by drawing or with models, to embody the sound. This covers not only the technical aspect of lip synch but serves as a test of the student's approach to character animation and/or interpretation of voice and sound.

Each project concludes with a joint criticism and discussion of the work by all the first year students and the workshop Tutors. At the end of the six weeks all the projects are reviewed. 1st year students, Department and Workshop Tutors and the Head of Department contribute to the discussion. The workshop material may also be looked at in the Interim Assessment and students are asked to keep a good copy for presentation and the Department Archive.

### **Week 7 Storyboard Workshops**

At least three directors will supervise short workshops, demonstrating their approach to storyboarding and development of ideas.

### **Other First Term Activities**

#### **Critical and Historical Studies**

Attendance at weekly College-Wide CHS lectures is compulsory.

Students are expected to have already a basic knowledge of the discipline. A series of animation specific Lectures and Screenings are arranged to explore some of the important themes in the study of animation. Gaps in students' knowledge can be filled through personal research, viewing tapes in the College library, and from Al Rees, a research fellow in the School of Communications. Visits to film festivals are a valuable way of developing an understanding of contemporary themes in animation, and students in the Department are encouraged to attend.

## **Drawing Studio**

Students attend drawing workshops especially devised to feed into the studio-based work. Other drawing workshops and courses are offered throughout the year. Second years are encouraged to maintain their Drawing practice throughout their Course and special workshops are available until the end of January with Leverhulme Scholar, Jeanine Breaker. More information on the Drawing studio generally is available in the College Guide. A timetable of College Wide workshops will be posted on the Department Notice Board each week, or can be viewed on the Intranet. (See below for intro to Intranet)

## **College Wide Digital Studio (Steven's Building)**

Students can sign up for introductory computer courses via the College's Intranet. See the Department Administrator if you need an introduction to using the Intranet. These are attended alongside their other work. (See Animation notice board for details or contact the computing administrator, Michelle on ext. 4232). You should visit the Digital Studio on your Library Tour in the first week of term.

## **Workshops**

Special screenings are planned for the coming year. In previous years Mark Baker, Neville Astley, Caroline Leaf, Piotr Dumala, Jan Lenica, Robert Breer and Bärbel Neubauer have taught workshops. Jiri Barta and Andreas Hykade have been invited to give workshops for this academic year.

## **Competitions**

Throughout the course students are encouraged to enter competitions such as The Folio Society, RSA, D+AD and Adobe. Information is posted on the notice board, or announced at Department Forums. The competitions tutor is Ruth Lingford.

At the end of the First Year the completed projects are shown to one of our sponsors, Passion Pictures. They award the Passion Prize to one student in the first year. The Prize is a budget of £3,000 to make your 2<sup>nd</sup> year project/s.

## **One-Minute Film/Experiments**

During the first term, first year students are given the brief for their second term's work - the One-Minute project, Experiments, Character Development. Students also attend a series of short script workshops to provide insights into research and scripting. Story boarding, time management and budgeting can be discussed in one-to-one tutorials with the department staff. The usual budget allocation for the first year film is £350. This is to include the total cost of the film, video or computer project up to showprint stage if appropriate. Students must prepare a **Statement of Intent** outlining their own aims and objectives for second term and for the One-Minute Project/Experiments/Character Development. An option to focus on sound for another Director's project is possible, if a student has a particular aptitude for sound design. More details will be available in November.

## **Collaboration.**

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to make contacts with other departments within the College and outside. This has led to fruitful collaborations particularly in the area of sound design, music and cinematography. An introductory visit to the Royal College of Music in the Autumn Term is an opportunity to make contact with talented Composers and to start a dialogue.

### **Christmas Vacation**

Students are expected to spend at least one week of the vacation researching and preparing their One-Minute Project/Experiments/Character Development.

## **Second Term, Year 1 (13 weeks)**

### **First Year Projects**

The 13 weeks of the second term are taken up with preparing and making their first year chosen option. If a student chooses to create a series of experiments as research for a future project, then the experiments must be brought to a conclusion and presented professionally. Details of the Character Development option will be available in November. The execution of these projects forms the principal material for the Interim Assessment, which takes place at the end of the second term. Access to specialist equipment not available within the department may be arranged either by individual students or by staff. Please notify your personal tutor if you plan to work away from the college for prolonged periods of time. You should see your personal tutor at least twice per term. These tutorials can take place away from the College if access to specialist equipment demands this.

### **Other work**

Short courses continue to be available in the digital studio. These courses are not usually available in the Summer Term and so it is advisable to take advantage of them during this time. Individual bookings for access to the workstations may be made after students have completed the introductory courses. Regular attendance in the Drawing Studio is also expected. In this term students may also participate in the printmaking, photography or any of the other short course facilities. Throughout the term visiting tutors will show their work and offer tutorials. College-wide CHS lectures are also offered. Each student must sign up for one course but may also attend other lectures of interest.

### **Interim Assessment**

*See Interim Assessment and Method section for details.*

### **Work-in-Progress Show**

1st and 2nd Years students are expected to prepare a work-in-progress show for display in one of the College's galleries. Prospective employers are invited

to this exhibition and it is an opportunity to get their feedback and make contacts.

### **Stills**

Students are encouraged to take stills of their work-in-progress and finished artwork or sets. These are a valuable record of their progress and are necessary as publicity material for festivals and the Summer Show. Your projects cannot be sent to festivals unless you provide a set of stills and the relevant information.

### **Easter Vacation**

The College is open for approximately 1.5 weeks of the vacation for independent practice and for assisting 2nd years. The booking of any equipment for this period should be done well in advance to ensure that Technical support will be available if necessary.

### **Third Term, Year 1 (10 weeks)**

The first week of term is spent assisting a second year with their graduation project unless they have agreed to help over the Easter break. Some first years in the past have assisted more than one-second year.

After the **Interim Assessment**, with the **Self Analysis Report** on the outcome of the First Year Project, and in consultation with the Department Tutors and Head of Department, students decide on what aspect of their work they should concentrate. Reflection Tutorials are an opportunity to present your work to your peers and staff to get feedback on your progress, strengths and areas for further exploration. Students may undertake one or more further short projects or begin to lay the groundwork of their final degree project. Workshops in Scriptwriting, Directing Actors, and Animation techniques, are scheduled for this term to enhance this development.

A written plan for this term should be prepared by the student for discussion with their personal tutor and where appropriate with the technical instructor especially if access to equipment is required. Special access to equipment outside of the college can be arranged if the project demands it. This usually depends on the individual student's ability to arrange access with helpful facilities houses or production companies.

### **Critical and Historical Studies (college-wide, school of communications)**

The Royal College of Art provides a unique environment for postgraduate art and design students to reflect upon their own practice, and to engage with students from their own and other disciplines. The role of Critical and Historical Studies (CHS) is to support the studio courses in enabling these critical engagements to take place. The courses offered by CHS to every first year MA student offer them with an intellectual framework within which they can begin to establish a coherent relationship between theory and practice.

In the first term the students are offered a range of courses that are each closely related to one of the groups of disciplines represented by the Schools, including Applied Art, Architecture, Design, Communications, Fashion & Textiles and Fine Art. Through lectures, screenings, visits and seminars they explore key debates and issues within contemporary culture. While most students will take a course that is related to their particular discipline, there is also the opportunity for them to explore issues outside of their discipline by electing for one of the other courses.

In the second term students elect from a set of more broadly-based courses each of which deal with subjects that are intentionally cross-disciplinary and so will appeal to students from any area of study. These lecture series perform a special role within the cultural life of the College, providing the forum for students from across all Departments and schools to meet and exchange ideas. By presenting a broad spectrum of ideas, issues and approaches, they help to prepare students for the challenge of selecting and developing the subject for their Humanities dissertation.

### **Dissertation**

The Summer Term is devoted to the preparation and writing of a dissertation that is completed by the end of the first year. Students are tutored by CHS staff that are chosen as far as is possible to correspond with their chosen subject. The dissertation represents an important stage in the process of critical reflection for MA students, and as part of that process it provides them with the space to investigate in depth a subject of their own choice. Students whose first language is not English or those with Dyslexia are offered extra tutorial support for the Dissertation and other written elements of the Course. This support is available from the beginning of the Course and it is important that you take advantage of this from the start so that you can develop your skills to take full part in lectures, seminars and workshops.

The Critical and Historical Programme is intended to enhance the creative relationship between theory and practice. It is designed to make a significant contribution to the student experience at the Royal College of Art by engaging with theoretical ideas in an exciting and challenging manner, and by establishing their relevance to each student's own practice.

### **Summer Vacation**

During the summer vacation students are required to research and write their graduation project. Access to the studio and equipment is possible for experiments and tests. Many students work, travel, or gain placements with industry during the Summer Vacation.

## **First Term, Year 2 (11 weeks)**

### **Degree Project/s Production**

Preparation and initial stages of production of the degree project/s occur during this term. The storyboards and production planning, carried out in consultation with the Head of Department, tutors and technical instructor, should be

completed by the mid term. The allocation of a production number, after a formal production meeting, will allow you to begin production proper. Further contacts with musicians, composers, actors and scriptwriters are encouraged.

An introduction to the role of Producer and discussion of the Producer/Director relationship will be given alongside more detailed analysis of the value of storyboards, schedules and budgets.

Workshops in scriptwriting, editing and drama usually take place during this term and build on those undertaken in the summer term.

### **Production meetings**

At key points during the second year, production meetings will be scheduled. Staff present will include personal tutor, department director and department technical instructor.

At the first production meeting each student should present

- **Statement of Intent**
- Rough budget
- Rough schedule and storyboard indicating style, content and technical resources required.

At the mid-production stage each student should present:

- rushes or line tests  
or experimental footage/Artwork or digital equivalents
- written **Self-Assessment** (guidelines for this will be given out)

At pre-assessment each student should present:

- Rough Picture Cut of project with separate laid tracks/music either digital or analogue
  - rough estimates of expenditure
  - a **Statement of Intent** for completion of sound/music

At Final Assessment each student should present:

- Final cut or edited beta copy of project with final mixed track
- Written **Statement of Outcome.**

### **Production Budgets**

The budget for each project will be based on an approved script or detailed description of content and/or storyboard. The average total cost of a graduating project is £1,200 including showprint. The budget amount will be announced at the beginning of Term 1. The project should be of a minimum length of at least 3 minutes. Production may begin when budget, script and storyboard have been discussed and approved at a formal Production Meeting. The Technical Instructor will closely record the spending by each student so that both the Head of Department, Personal Tutors and the student will have a clear idea of the state of their spending.

Overspending may result in show prints not being made. Overspends are carried over into the following financial year and so reduce the budget for following student productions. Funds from outside the College should be sought to fund ambitious projects. Students are encouraged to find sponsorship for specialist materials where possible and should ask for a discount for any purchases or services required.

### **Christmas vacation**

The College is open for approximately 1 week over Christmas for independent practice and study.

### **Second Term, Year 2 (11 weeks)**

This term is spent in production creating the content, working with composers and dealing with other elements of the soundtrack for the final degree project/s.

Students need to co-operate with each other in the planning of their Summer Show and we encourage liaising with a Graphic Design student for the design of the Show, intertitles, video cover and postcards.

### **Easter Vacation**

The College is open for approximately 1.5 weeks over the vacation for shooting, editing and other independent practice and study. Booking of equipment should be done well ahead of time to ensure access and availability of technical support if appropriate.

### **Third Term, Year 2 (12 weeks)**

All image and principle sound is to be complete by the end of the first week of term for Pre Assessments. Final Assessments are in the sixth week. In the interval, between Pre and Final Assessments, final editing and mixing of the soundtrack takes place. After Final Assessment, showprints are made to be ready for the Summer Show and preparation of art work for the Summer Show begins: these are expected to be of a professional standard. Interactive projects should be burnt to disc at this stage. Linear digital projects should have a high-resolution transfer to Video. During the Summer Show, individual and group tutorials in Professional Practice take place. These are a mandatory element of the Course.

Career advice is available by appointment with the Head of Department, Jeremy North (professional Practice Tutor) and Department Tutors. Also, throughout the year, recruiting officers of major animation companies will give presentations and offer advice on portfolios and opportunities within their companies. An electronic Helpline provided by Jeremy North is available to students while enrolled at the College and for a year after graduation.

### **Summer Vacation**



The studios remain open for independent practice until studentship ends on 31st July. All belongings must be removed on or before this date to allow for cleaning.

### **Progression**

There are few variations to the progress of students from Interim Assessment to Final Assessment:

The infrequent variations are:

- a) Where a student has failed to satisfy at Interim Assessment and has been specified a piece of work to be completed by the end of the third term. Decision on progress to a second year will not be delayed beyond the beginning of the fourth term.
- b) Short periods at the Barcelona, Florence or Lisbon studios, during which students are expected to carry out a specified programme of work, although they are away from the facilities of the College.
- c) A term on the Kyoto University exchange in Japan. This exchange is limited to a single student and based upon a detailed written proposal by students who are interested. This year one of our second year students, Emily Mantell is studying in Kyoto for the Autumn Term. She will return in January.

## ***Course Structure***

### **MA Course**

The Course structure is broadly planned for MA students who follow the outlined course curriculum. Research students negotiate their own plan of study and may participate in workshops and events as appropriate and if numbers allow. In the first year Department Tutors give students one-to-one and group tutorials. Second year students are supervised mainly by the Personal Tutors and script advisors. Visiting Lecturers provide specialist tuition not covered by tutorial staff.

### **MPhil Course**

MPhil students may take part in the normal projects and activities of the first two terms of the MA course, while being given additional tuition by their supervisors.

During these terms the MPhil student is also given instruction in research methods by the Research Department and has a further supervisor assigned to his or her research. In the remaining four terms an even balance is struck between researching and writing the thesis, and completing a practical project for the final degree.

If a student wishes to take an MPhil by Thesis then no practical projects are needed but a longer, more in depth, thesis is required.

A special examination board is convened for the examination of M Phil students.

The Handbook for Research Students describes the awards of MPhil/PhD in more detail. Please contact Rachel Linden, Research Administrator, ext. 4397. email: [rachel.linden@rca.ac.uk](mailto:rachel.linden@rca.ac.uk).

## A7 SCHWARTZ

### Saturday Morning: the History of Televised Animation

FIDM 42 ?

Jeremy Schwartz  
JeremyCSchwartz@yahoo.com  
476-9434

Office Hours:  
Blah Blah- Blah Blah  
@ blah blah

#### Course Description:

A comprehensive study of the history of animation on television, examining the institutional, economic and social forces that affect the medium.

The class is structured chronologically, with points of focus in 5 main areas:

Saturday Mornings- a look at the basic changes within a decade of animation on television.

Superheroes- a look at the changes in how power narratives are played out through a time period

Imports- the influence of foreign animation markets

Toyetics and the New Wave- an examination of the intersection of new wave auteur theory and modern marketing tactics as they exist in modern animation (1987- present)

Education- a look at the educational uses of animation on television.

#### Grading Breakdown:

3 of 4 cartoon reviews- 10% each	30%	
bumper analysis	10%	
commercial analysis		10%
attendance/participation	10%	
Midterm	20%	
Final		20%

#### Cartoon Review:

A short (2-3 page, double spaced, 12pt font) review of a half hour cartoon from an approved list. The review should explain the plot of that episode in 2-3 sentences, examine style, and discuss how it fits into social and commercial movements.

#### Bumper analysis

A 1-2 page analysis of a set of bumpers (for a single show). Examine how it serves within the flow of the show. Does it connect to the show? How does it make you want to "not touch that dial?"

#### Commercial analysis

A 1-2 page analysis of an animated commercial. Who is this advertising to? How does animation in this advertisement serve to 'sell' the product? Would it work as a live-action commercial? Why/why not?

#### Attendance/Participation

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class meeting. There is no penalty for the first absence, after that, the next two absences drop your grade 5%. A failing grade will result after the third unexcused absence.

#### Midterm

An essay to be handed in on the day of the midterm. More to follow.

#### Final

An essay to be handed in on the day of the final. More to follow.

Readings:

Newton Minow. Abandoned in the Wasteland. Children, Television and the First Amendment. Hill and Wang. New York. 1995.

Paul Wells. Animation and America. Rutgers University Press. New Brunswick, New Jersey. 2002.

Susan Napier. Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke. Palgrave. New York. 2001.

Gene Del Vecchio. Creating Ever-Cool A Marketer's Guide to a Kid's Heart. Pelican. Gretna, Louisiana. 1998.

Keith Scott. The Moose that Roared. Thomas Dunne Books. New York. 2000.

Cosby, William. "An Integration of the Visual Media via Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids into the Elementary school Curriculum as a teaching aid and vehicle to achieve increased Learning." University of Massachusetts Press. Massachusetts, 1976.

- 1 Introduction:  
Origins of animation, establishment of the "child's medium"  
Telecommunications acts of 1927 and 1934- What is the FCC and FTC?  
Screening: Gertie the Dinosaur (Winsor McCay), Mr. Magoo (UPA)  
Reading: Paul Wells Animation and America Animation and Modernism
- 2 Beginnings of Animation on Television  
Cinematic animation to 1950. UPA and Terrytoons  
Gerald McBoing Boing, Tom Terrific, Mr. Magoo, Puss Gets the Boot, Heckle and Jeckle, Mighty Mouse.  
Screening: Mighty Mouse, Terry Toons
- 3 Saturday Mornings Part I: The Beginnings 1949-1960  
Crusader Rabbit, Ruff and Reddy, Rocky and Bulwinkle, Huckleberry Hound, the Flintstones, Top Cat  
Screening: Crusader Rabbit (Jay Ward), Ruff and Reddy (Hanna Barbera)  
Reading: Keith Scott The Moose that Roared Bullwinkle hits the Bigtime
- 4 Superheroes Part I  
Spiderman, Fantastic Four, Jonny Quest, Space Ghost and Dino Boy  
Screening: Spiderman, Fantastic Four  
[Cartoon Review due]
- 5 Saturday Morning Part II: Commercialism  
Creation of the ACT  
Commercials: Cap'n Crunch, Flintstones/vitamins/Winston  
Reading: Keith Scott The Moose that Roared This is what I really call a message
- 6 Vast Wasteland  
The FCC and FTC under Newton Minow  
Reading: Newton Minow Abandoned in the Wasteland
- 7 Super Heroes Part II: Socially conscious superheroes  
Superfriends, Spiderman and his amazing friends, Sealab 2020  
Screening: Superfriends, Sealab 2020 (Hanna Barbera)  
[Cartoon Review Due]
- 8 Saturday Morning Part III: The Free Market 1980's  
Removal of the FCC ban, the new ACT struggles, plus cable!  
Screening: Strawberry Shortcake, Gobots, G I Joe  
Reading: Newton Minow Abandoned in the Wasteland
- 9 Educational Cartoons part 1  
PBS, Sesame Street, Fat Albert  
Screening: Fat Albert, Sesame Street, Schoolhouse Rock  
[Bumper analysis due]

- Reading: Bill Cosby Integration of visual media via Fat Albert
- 10 Imports part 1: imported animation to 1988  
Japanese influence on American animation, plus the French and British  
Astroboy, Kimba the White Lion, Speed Racer, G-Force, Voltron, Spartakus and the Sun Beneath the Sea, Babar, Danger Mouse  
Screening: Astro Boy, Spartakus, Danger Mouse
- 11 Educational Cartoons part 2: After Cable  
Blues Clues, Little Bill, Playhouse Disney  
Screening: Little Bill, Blues Clues  
[Midterm due]
- 12 Super Heroes Part III- Post FCC Ban  
New “commercialized” superheroes  
He-man, Transformers, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Thundercats, Nintendo Power-Hour.  
Screening: He-man, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Captain N  
Reading: Newton Minow Abandoned in the Wasteland
- 13 Saturday Morning Part IV: 1990- Present  
Telecommunications act of 1990, 1996  
Disbanding of ACT, What is ‘educational?’  
[cartoon review due]  
Screening: Disney’s Doug, Stargate, Ozzie & Drix.
- 14 Toyetics and the New Wave part I: Toyetics  
Animation since the Little Mermaid- focusing on commercialism.  
Disney, WB, Fox  
Screening: Freakazoid, Ducktales, Tiny Toons  
Reading: Gene Del Vecchio Creating Ever-Cool Attaining Ever-cool
- 15 Imports part II: Popularity of Japanese animation  
Japanese imported animation since 1989 (Akira)  
Sailor Moon, Dragonball/Z/GT, Pokemon/Digimon, Cowboy Bebop,  
Screening: Pokemon, Cowboy Bebop  
Reading: Susan Napier Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke the Fifth Look:  
Western Audiences and Japanese Animation
- 16 Super Heroes Part IV: Back to basics  
Continuity in new superhero cartoons- the saga and the flashback and the movie tie-  
in  
New Batman/Superman, Spiderman, X-Men,  
[Commercial analysis due]  
Screening:
- 17 Pushing the Envelope: animation for adults  
Liquid TV, The Simpsons, Southpark  
[Cartoon Review due]  
Screening: Bevis and Butthead
- 18 Toyetics and the New Wave part II: New Wave  
All-children’s networks and animation, Nicktoons, Clasky-Cuspo, Cartoon-Cartoons  
and Postmodern cartoons.  
Screening: New Mighty Mouse, Ren and Stimpy,  
Reading: Paul Wells Animation and America synaesthetics, subversion, television  
Recommended Reading: Auteur theory
- 19 Imports part II: Popularity of Japanese animation  
Japanese imported animation since 1989 (Akira)  
Sailor Moon, Dragonball/Z/GT, Pokemon/Digimon, Cowboy Bebop,  
Screening: Pokemon, Cowboy Bebop  
Reading: Susan Napier Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke the Fifth Look:  
Western Audiences and Japanese Animation
- 20 What’s in the future?  
CG animation, the imported future, animation for adults

Reboot, Silver Surfer, Family Guy, Web-based cartoons, Anime Channel, what's coming in seasons ahead.  
Final

## A8 WEB PAGES

The following are the URLs of a selection of animation courses, sketching out course rationale, offering some details of mode of study etc. These are not already featured in the Appendix.

### **Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design (Canada)**

Bachelor of Media Arts (Animation Major)

<http://www.eciad.bc.ca/eciad/degrees/animation.html>

### **Southampton Institute (UK)**

Illustration and Animation BA(Hons)

<http://www.solent.ac.uk/courses/courseinfo.asp?courseid=590>

### **Surrey Institute of Art and Design (UK)**

BA (Hons.) Animation

<http://www.surrart.ac.uk/opportunities/undergrad/animation.html>

### **Manchester Metropolitan University (UK)**

BA (Hons.) Illustration with Animation

<http://www.artdes.mmu.ac.uk/commsmedia/baillustrationwithanimation.htm>

### **Canterbury Christ Church University College (UK)**

BA Animation

<http://prospectus.cant.ac.uk/undergraduate/current/animation.htm>

### **University of Westminster (UK)**

BA (Hons.) Illustration/Animation

[http://www.wmin.ac.uk/mad/courseareas/art/ba\\_illustration.html](http://www.wmin.ac.uk/mad/courseareas/art/ba_illustration.html)

### **Norwich School of Art and Design (UK)**

MA Animation and Sound Design

<http://www.nsad.ac.uk/courses/maanimationsound.php>

### **Arts Institute at Bournemouth**

BA (Hons.) Film and Animation Production

<http://www.aib.ac.uk/aj/coursehtmls/bafilmanim.html>

### **CalArts (USA)**

Experimental Animation

<http://film.calarts.edu/ea.html>

### **CalArts (USA)**

Character Animation

<http://film.calarts.edu/ca.html>

### **University of Central Lancashire**

BA (Hons.) Animation

<http://www.uclan.ac.uk/courses/ug/dt/animation.htm>

### **Rochester Institute of Technology (USA)**

BFA degree program in Film and Animation

<http://www.rit.edu/~sofa/undergrad/index.html>

This is a 4 year programme, with a 'common' first year, after which students choose a specialism, which could be Animation.

**University of Southern California, School of Cinema-Television (USA)**

Undergraduate and MFA programmes in Animation and Digital Arts

[http://www-cntv.usc.edu/academic\\_programs/animation/academic-animation-home.php](http://www-cntv.usc.edu/academic_programs/animation/academic-animation-home.php)

**New York University Tisch School of the Arts (USA)**

BA Film and TV

<http://www.nyu.edu/tisch/filmtv/registration/cindex.htm>

This url takes you to the FTV page. Those students who follow the Animation pathway take the Animation modules in any particular year.

For more information see:

<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue3.11/3.11pages/canemakernyu.php3>



## Filmography

*Anchors Aweigh* (George Sidney, 1945, US, 143m)

*Begone Dull Care* (Norman McLaren, 1949, Canada, 8m)

*Chicken Run* (Peter Lord and Nick Park, 2000, UK, 84m)

*Close Shave, A* (Nick Park, 1995, UK, 30m)

*Closed Mondays* (Bob Gardiner and Will Vinton, 1974, US, 11m)

*Dazed and Confused* (Richard Linklater, 1993, US, 103m)

*Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (Hironobu Sakaguchi and Moto Sakakibara, 2001, USA/Japan, 106m)

*Hen Hop* (Norman McLaren, 1942, Canada, 4m)

*History of the Main Complaint* (William Kentridge, 1996, South Africa, 4m)

*Jason and the Argonauts* (Don Chaffey, 1963, UK/US, 104m)

*Last Year in Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961, France/Italy, 94m)

*Lord of the Rings, The* (Peter Jackson, 2001-2003, NZ/US):

*The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001, 178m)

*The Two Towers* (2002, 179m)

*The Return of the King* (2003, 201m)

*Matrix, The* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999, US, 136m)

*Matrix Reloaded, The* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 2003, US, 138m)

*Matrix Revolutions, The* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 2003, US, 129m)

*Monsters Inc.* (Pete Docter, David Silverman and Lee Unkrich, 2001, US, 92m)

*Mulholland Dr.* (David Lynch, 2001, US/France, 145m)

*Neighbours* (Norman McLaren, 1952, Canada, 8m)

*Phantom Menace, The* [aka *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace*]  
(George Lucas, 1999, US, 133m)

*Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb, The* (Dave Borthwick, 1993, UK, 60m)  
*Shrek* (Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, 2001, US, 90m)  
*Slacker* (Richard Linklater, 1991, US, 97m)  
*Small Soldiers* (Joe Dante, 1998, US, 98m)  
*Snack and Drink* (Bob Sabiston, 1999, US, 4m)  
*Street, The* (Caroline Leaf, 1976, Canada, 10m)  
*Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997, US, 194m)  
*Toy Story* (John Lasseter, 1995, US, 81m)  
*Toy Story 2* (John Lasseter, Ash Brannon and Lee Unkrich, 1999, US, 92m)  
*Two Sisters* [aka *Entre deux soeurs*] (Caroline Leaf, 1990, Canada, 24m)  
*Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Bunuel, 1929, France, 16m)  
*Waking Life* (Richard Linklater, 2001, US, 99m)  
*Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (Robert Zemeckis, 1988, US, 103m)

## Bibliography

- Alvarado, M. and Boyd-Barrett, O (eds) (1992) Media Education: An Introduction London: BFI/Open University.
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Note on email discussion group material

All Animation Journal email discussion group posts can be accessed via the Animation Journal discussion group, hosted by Yahoo. However, you do need to be a member of the group to access the message archive. Membership of the 'animedu' discussion group is limited to those specifically engaged in/researching Animation and education.  
(see: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/animationjournal/messages/1>)

